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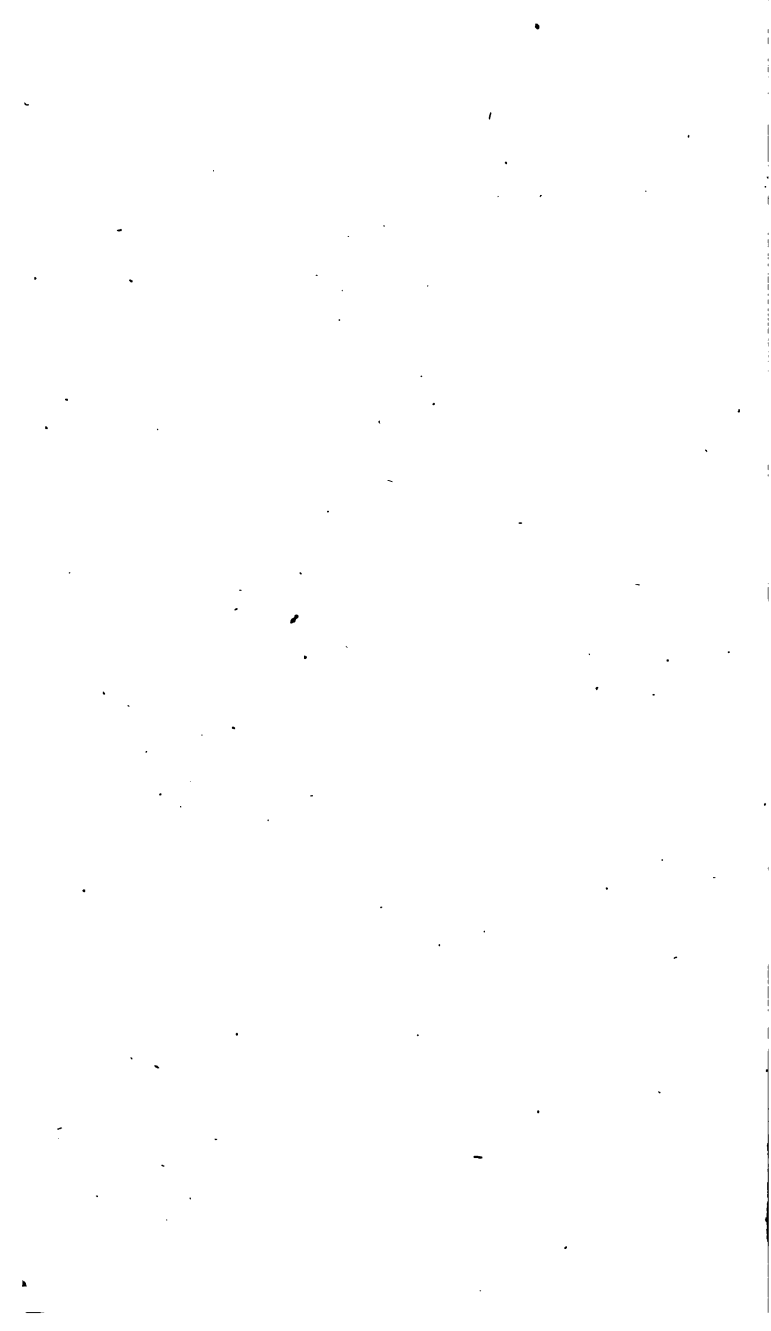
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Schiller

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HISTORY
OF THE
RISE AND PROGRESS
OF THE
BELGIAN REPUBLIC,
UNTIL THE REVOLUTION
UNDER
PHILIP II.
INCLUDING A DETAIL OF THE PRIMARY CAUSES
OF THAT MEMORABLE EVENT.
FROM THE GERMAN ORIGINAL OF
FREDERIC SCHILLER.

By THOMAS HORNE.

Hæc tibi sint artes Roma, quibus mundum gubernas,

Parcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.

Virgil.

Concordia parvæ res crescunt, discordia maxumæ dilabuntur.

Tacitus.

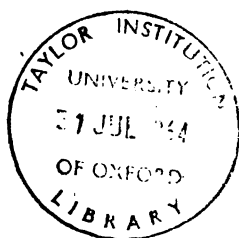
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following historical essay, which has been justly admired by foreign critics as a classical performance, is offered to the public by way of experiment, whether a foreign production will flourish in a British soil; whether the beams of an ardent imagination be obscured, or the lofty flights of a sublime genius be arrested in their progress to us. It is intended to serve as an introduction to Dr. Watson's celebrated History of Philip the Second, devellops the causes of the war in the most luminous manner, and delineates the characters of the principal actors on the theatre of the Netherlands, with much energy and eloquence. Schiller's

genius had much of the sublime and of the beautiful, like that of the late Edmund Burke. The finished portraits which Mr. Burke has drawn of many distinguished characters, are, in many respects, similar to those of William prince of Orange, and of Lamoral count of Egmont, pourtrayed by the masterly hand of Schiller, in the subsequent performance. With respect to my translation, I hope that I have written it with that sort of correctness and taste, which is the result of a long and complete acquaintance with the language of the original; and should this performance acquire a like reputation in my native country which it has abroad, then will my labour be amply remunerated.

THOMAS HORNE.

HISTORY
OF THE
RISE AND PROGRESS
OF THE
BELGIAN REPUBLIC.

SECTION I.

ONE of those extraordinary revolutions in politics, that have made the sixteenth century the most illustrious æra in the annals of mankind, is, I apprehend, that important crisis, when the noble structure of freedom was reared, on a solid and permanent basis, in the Provinces of Belgium. If the magnificent exploits of ambition, and

a raging lust of power and dominion, challenge our admiration, how much more so an event, wherein the human species, afflicted by the scourge of oppression, struggle manfully for the recovery of their most sacred privileges; a miraculous energy, and supernatural powers, being auxiliary to their righteous cause, whereby the mighty resources of despair, ultimately triumph over the insidious arts, and faithless policy of despotism.

It is an awful and comfortable reflection, that there is yet one remedy left against the insolent claims of regal prerogative; that plans of the deepest contrivance, for the subversion of liberty amongst mankind, may be rendered abortive; that a determined opposition can unnerve the uplifted arm of a tyrant, and heroic obstinacy exhaust all the dreadful materials and re-

sources of arbitrary power. I was never impressed with a more lively conviction of this solemn truth, than by the history of that memorable rebellion, which dismembered the United Provinces from the Spanish monarchy: on which account it appeared to me to be an undertaking highly meritorious and praiseworthy, to exhibit this monument of social union, in all its majesty and grandeur, before the eyes of the world; that I might peradventure excite some pleasing emotions of sympathy in the breast of my readers, and adduce new and irrefragable proofs, what men may venture to undertake in a righteous cause, and what they may accomplish by unity and concert.

It is not a surprising mixture of the marvellous and extraordinary, which allures me to commemorate this event. In the history

of mankind, revolutions are recorded more daring and arduous in the attempt, more splendid and glorious in the execution. Many governments have been blown up with a more tremendous explosion; others have advanced with more rapid strides towards the summit of power and glory. Neither are we to look for any of those sublime and stupendous characters, of more than mortal mould, nor any of those marvellous exploits with which ancient story so copiously abounds. Those times are past away; those men are no longer in being. Nursed in the soft cradle of luxury and refinement, we have idly consumed those energies, which past ages exercised, and which an imperious necessity demanded. With mute and languid stupefaction, we gaze at those gigantic figures of antiquity, in like manner as a decrepid old man sur-

veys, with conscious infirmity, the manly sports of youth. The history we have now in contemplation, is of quite a different cast and complexion. The people who make a principal figure on this stage, were the most pacific in the European world, and the least susceptible of that heroism, which imparts an air of grandeur to actions of an ordinary size and magnitude. The school of adversity infused into their minds a peculiar vigour and energy, and forced upon them a temporary greatness, that nature had never designed for them, and which they were not destined to behold again. That sort of energy which roused them to action, is, therefore, not dormant nor extinct amongst us; the signal success that crowned their daring attempt, is likewise reserved in store for us when a favorable conjuncture offers in

the revolution of ages, and similar causes call for the same measures, and a like plan of operations. It is, therefore, a total absence of magnanimity and heroic virtue, that conveys instruction, and constitutes the chief characteristic of this revolution; and whereas others propose to themselves, as their main object, to shew the superiority of genius, over fate and fortune, I shall now endeavour to exhibit a picture, wherein chance creates heroes, and genius is the offspring of necessity.

If we were, on any occasion, authorized to admit the intervention of a divine Providence in the government of human affairs, the present history might furnish us with a plausible pretence; so contradictory does it appear to human reason, and to all former experience. Philip the second, the most powerful monarch of his age, whose over-

grown empire menaced the liberties of Europe with destruction; whose treasures surpassed the aggregate sum of all the revenues of other Christian potentates; whose naval armaments overawed the seas: a monarch, whose dangerous schemes were assisted by powerful armies; armies trained, in long and bloody wars, to the severity of Roman tactics; inflamed with a fierce national pride; elate with the remembrance of recent triumphs; impatient to reap new harvests of laurels and booty, and ready to follow whithersoever the enterprising genius of their leaders thought fit to conduct them. This mighty mortal, being engrossed with the pursuit of a favourite scheme, an undertaking which filled up the measure of his long reign; who solely applied all the powers and energies of his prodigious empire, to the accomplishment of

this individual project, which he was compelled to relinquish in the evening of his days :

Philip the second, I say, was engaged in a warfare with a feeble confederacy of nations, which he could not bring to a fortunate issue and conclusion. Now, what nations were those, that opposed the schemes of his ambition? In one quarter, we behold some rude unwarlike clans of inoffensive fishermen and shepherds, in a remote corner of Europe, which their own toil had wrung from the watery waste; the ocean being at once the source of all their comforts, and all their calamities; their most valuable possession, a needy independence; their supreme boast, a virtuous life. In their vicinity dwells a happy community of merchants, cultivated by all the arts of polished life; rioting in the rich harvest of prosperous industry; vigilant

and circumspect in maintaining those laws, from whence all these blessings were derived. Basking in the sunshine of affluence and prosperity, they suddenly spurn the limits of that narrow sphere, wherein they had hitherto mechanically moved,—and their breasts learn to glow with more generous desires, and more noble appetites. The bright luminary of truth, which now began to diffuse its light over the European world, illumines this happy region with a cheerful ray; the enlightened citizen welcomes the heavenly messenger, banished from the dreary abodes of abject misery and despair. A gay wanton spirit of enterprize, the constant attendant on opulence and freedom, stimulates them to question the authority of opinions, sanctified by age and prejudice, and to break asunder those chains, the dishonourable

badges of servitude. The scourge of the tyrant is brandished over their heads; arbitrary power is preparing to overthrow the pillars of their happy constitution; their supreme magistrate, the guardian of their laws, becomes their tyrant. Discovering the same liberal views of foreign policy, as of domestic œconomy, they venture to remonstrate; they produce the musty records of an ancient charter, and remind the Lord of both the Indies, on the natural rights of man.

A verbal process brings the matter to an issue. At Madrid this was termed rebellion, which at Brussels was only regarded as a mild measure of legislative policy. The grievances of Brabant, required gentle remedies, and conciliatory measures: Philip sent them a butcher, and a blood thirsty tyrant. A system of unexampled tyranny

rendered their lives and property insecure. The desponding citizen, having the choice left him of two different kinds of death, nobly resolves to seek an honourable grave in the field of battle. A nation of opulent and wealthy individuals, are averse to war; but want and poverty breeds warriors. Now they are no longer desirous to preserve an existence, destitute of every thing that rendered it desirable.

The contagion spreads like wild fire even to the remotest provinces; a general stagnation ensues in the commercial world; the harbours are left desolate; the industrious artisan abandons his workshop, and the peasant, beholding his hopes of returning harvests blasted, forsakes his rural field. Many hundreds emigrate to distant countries, in quest of new habitations; the scaffolds are imbrued with human gore, and

other converts hasten to share the same fate: for that doctrine must assuredly be of divine origin, the votaries of which resign their lives, with such pious fortitude and tranquillity. Nothing more was requisite than the plastic hand of the supreme architect; than that illustrious and transcendent genius, who improved this grand political crisis, and converted the fickle offspring of a blind chance, into the stable and solid production of wisdom and sagacity.

William the discreet, another Brutus, dedicates his life and services to the glorious cause of freedom. Unmoved by any base considerations of personal interest, he makes a solemn renunciation of his criminal engagements with the crown; abandons, with a noble and manly spirit, the honours of his rank and dignity; condescends to occupy the low station of an humble indi-

vidual, and assumes no higher character than that of a citizen of the world. The righteous cause is committed to the final arbitration of the sword, and to the dubious event of battles; but a soldiery, composed of mercenaries, hastily collected together, and an unwarlike peasantry, are too feeble to withstand the disciplined valour of a regular army.—Twice he ventures to take the field, with this disorderly rabble, against the veteran troops of the tyrant: both times he is deserted by his dastardly followers; but his constancy remains unshaken.

Philip, himself, sends him fresh supplies and reinforcements, from that numerous class of individuals whom his sordid avarice had reduced to beggary. Vagrants, expelled from their native homes, look out for other habitations on the wide ocean, and glut the fierce lust of revenge, and the

cravings of hunger, by taking possession of the ships of their adversary. Freebooters become naval heroes; a navy is collected from the armaments of pirates, and a republic suddenly starts up in the midst of bogs and marshes. With one effort seven provinces break loose from the chains of servitude, and form a new infant state, guarded by unanimity, by despair, and by the depredations of their watery element. The public voice deposes the tyrant, and the Spanish name is expunged from all the solemn acts of the legislature. They have now transgressed beyond a possibility of pardon; the republic becomes formidable, because she can make no retrograde movement.

Their unanimity is disturbed, and their councils distracted by the warfare of factions; nay, even their own tremendous

element, the ocean, appears to have entered into a league with their oppressor, and threatens to overwhelm the infant state with a total overthrow. Sensible that their powers are not commensurate with the task of supporting this heavy load of calamity, they bend, in a suppliant posture, before the throne of the mightiest monarch in Europe, and beseech him to ease their shoulders of that sovereignty, which they can no longer support with a suitable dignity. At length, with much importunity—so contemptible were the beginnings of this state, that they did not even tempt the avarice of crowned heads—they prevail upon a stranger to accept this ambiguous diadem.

Their drooping spirits are cheered with fresh hopes; but their evil destiny had planted a wily serpent in their bosom,

under the fair form of a guardian angel; and in that critical moment, when a merciless foe was preparing to storm their gates, Charles of Anjou, with sacrilegious hands, endeavours to violate that liberty which he was called to protect. The impious arm of an assassin snatches the able pilot from the helm of state; the measure of their woes seems already compleat; all their tutelar deities fled along with William of Orange: but the ship rides triumphant amidst the storm, its crouded sails no longer require the guidance of an able navigator. Philip the second, beholds the promising harvest of a villainous action blasted, whereby he had forfeited the richest jewel of his diadem, his royal honour; and, what is still more, perhaps, the sunshine of his soul, his ease and tranquillity.

A fierce and obstinate struggle ensues

betwixt liberty and despotism; bloody battles are fought; an illustrious race of heroes tread in succession the lists of glory. Flanders and Brabant was the prolific soil, in whose womb were formed the generals and commanders of the subsequent century. The rich produce of the plains are blighted by a long and destructive warfare. The victors and the vanquished are weltering in their blood, on the field of battle, whilst the infant maritime state, arrests the flight of the sons of industry, and raises the magnificent structure of her own greatness upon the ruins of her neighbour.

This war, which had raged with unremitting fury, during the space of forty years, and the happy conclusion of which, Philip was not destined to behold in his last moments, had converted one garden of Europe into a desert, and created another

upon its ruins; had cut off the flower of the rising generation, and, by diffusing wealth and opulence over one quarter of the world, had reduced the mighty sovereign of Peru to want and beggary.

This great monarch, who, without imposing any extraordinary burdens upon the subject, could dissipate an annual revenue of nine hundred tons of gold, who raised a far greater sum by the various arts of extortion, left his desolated kingdom loaded with an enormous debt of one hundred and forty millions of ducats. An implacable aversion to liberty dilapidated all these immense hoards of treasure, and consumed the youthful prime and vigour of royalty: but the Reformation flourished, amidst the ravages and desolation of wars; and the infant Republic erected the standard of victory, reeking with the gore of her citizens.

This strange revolution, in the aspect of affairs, seems to border upon a miracle; but a variety of causes conspired to hasten the downfall of this mighty empire, and to accelerate the progress of the rising republic. If the collective force of his realm had fallen upon the United Provinces, their civil and religious liberties would inevitably have been crushed by the rude and irresistible shock. His own ambition proved an usefully to their imbecility, by inducing him to divide his power.

That invaluable mystery of politics, to entertain a multitude of pensioned spies at all the courts of Europe; the succours sent to the league in France; the defection of the Moors of Grenada; the conquest of Portugal, and the magnificent structure of the Escorial, drained those rich mines of treasure, till then deemed inexhaustible, and

relaxed the spirit and vigour of his operations in the field. The German and Italian troops, whom an insatiable lust of plunder alone had allured to join his standard, now, that he was no longer able to advance their pay, basely deserted their commanders, in the critical moment of action. These terrible ministers of oppression now converted their dangerous power against their legitimate sovereign, and desolated, with hostile fury, those provinces, that had remained unshaken in their loyalty and obedience. Finally, that unfortunate expedition against Britain, on which, with the wild and desperate spirit of a furious gamester, he had rashly staked the whole credit and safety of his realm, accomplished his ruin : the tribute of both the Indies; and the flower of the Spanish veterans, perished along with the Armada.

In proportion as the powers of the Spanish monarchy declined, the Republic acquired new accessions of strength, and fresh supplies of vital energy. By the new religion, by the tyranny of the inquisition, by the insolence of a rapacious soldiery, by the desolation of a destructive war, the Provinces of Brabant, of Flanders and Hene-gau, the grand arsenal and granary of the armies, had been incessantly ravaged and depopulated, and consequently it became more difficult every year, to raise the necessary supplies and recruits for the army.

The catholic Netherlands had lost above a million of their inhabitants, and the fertile plains being converted into a wilderness, did no longer suffice for the support and sustenance of the husbandman. Spain herself could furnish a very small number of men. These countries, by a sudden flow

of wealth and prosperity, attended by their usual concomitants, luxury and idleness, had suffered greatly in their population, and they were not in a condition to support much longer those heavy transports of troops to the new world, and to the low countries. Few amongst their number were so fortunate as to behold their native country again, and these few, who had forsaken the habitations of their forefathers in the prime and vigour of youth, returned again, labouring under the pressure and infirmities of a decrepid old age. The depreciated value of gold, now become more frequent, enhanced the price of soldiers; the charms of a voluptuous life proved fatal to the vegetation of the opposite virtues.

The affairs of the rebels wore quite a different aspect. Many thousands of victims, whom the impolitic cruelty of the Viceroy,

the war of the Hugonots, and the terrors of the inquisition, had expelled from the southern provinces of the Low countries, from France and other kingdoms, all flocked to their standard. They raised levies throughout all Christendom. The fanaticism of the oppressors, as well as of the oppressed, was equally propitious to their cause. The rising flame of enthusiasm for a doctrine lately promulgated, revenge, famine and despair, urged a number of adventurers from every quarter of Europe, to espouse their cause.

All the proselytes of the new doctrine, all those whom the recent smart of past sufferings, or a dread of impending danger had excited to rebel against the tyrant, resolved to share the fortunes of the Republic.

In Holland, every injury inflicted by the tyrant was remunerated with the communion

and privileges of a citizen. A vast concourse of men, of all descriptions, crowded into a country, where liberty waved her sacred banners, where an asylum was prepared for the exiled votaries of religion, and where they were assured of present security, and of future redress for their wrongs. When we reflect on the mighty influx of all nations into Holland, at the present day, who, on their first arrival in this country, were reinstated in the possession of all their natural rights; what are we to suppose, must have been the case at that time, when the remainder of Europe was enslaved in the cruel chains of a spiritual servitude, whilst Amsterdam was almost the only market, on which a free commerce and intercourse of opinions was countenanced and encouraged? Many hundreds of families found security for their property in a

state, whose powerful guerdons were the ocean, and her own unanimity.

The levies of the Republican army were effected, without interrupting the peaceful labours of the husbandman. Amidst the tumult of war, trade and commerce were in a prosperous and flourishing condition, and the peaceful citizen reaped the golden harvests of liberty, purchased with the blood of aliens and foreigners.

At a time when Holland was engaged in a fierce and bloody struggle for her own independance, she was enlarging the boundaries of her territory, and laying the foundations of a monarchy beyond the Atlantic ocean in the eastern world. But this is not all. Spain supported the heavy burden and charges of this war, with a lifeless mass of unproductive treasure, that never returned into the prodigal hand which had squan-

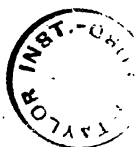
dered it away, but only served to enhance the price of all the necessities of life in Europe. The national bank of the Republic, was industry and commerce. The former was diminished, and the latter was augmented by the lapse of time.

In proportion as the vital powers of the monarchy were consumed, by the long duration of the war, the Republic began to reap the bountiful harvest of her labours. It was a plentiful crop, sown in a happy soil, and yielding a hundred fold: the tree, whose boughs Philip stript of their produce, was a huge unwieldy stem, with an axe applied to its root, which was never to vegetate again.

Philip's evil genius had decreed, that all those treasures which he dissipated with a prodigal hand, in order to accelerate the downfall of his provinces, only served to

enrich them. Those copious streams of gold, which flowed incessantly from the kingdom of Spain, with a silent and steady current, had diffused wealth and affluence over the European world. Europe received the multiplied articles of luxury, for the most part, from the Flemish, who were now sovereigns of the commercial world, and determined the price of commodities by arbitrary decrees.

During the progress of this war, Philip could not prohibit an illicit commerce between his subjects and the Republic, nay, he durst not even flatter himself with hopes of accomplishing such a project. He furnished his rebellious subjects with the means of their own defence; for the same war, the declared object of which was their final ruin, opened new channels for the vent of their commodities. The enormous sums ex-



pended, in order to equip his fleets and armies, made their way into the coffers of that Republic, which had entered into a close alliance with the commercial towns of Flanders and Brabant. All the deep plans of revenge, which Philip meditated in the gloomy recesses of his soul against his rebellious subjects, proved favourable to their cause. He could take no effectual steps against the enemy, because he could not encompass his kingdom with a wall of circumvallation. All the prodigious hoards of treasure, which a war of forty years had consumed, were soused into the casks of the Danaids, and glided into a bottomless abyss.

The dilatory manner in which this war was conducted, was equally propitious to the cause of liberty, and prejudicial to the affairs of the Spanish monarch. The main

body of his army was formed out of the surviving relics of those victorious warriors, who had been crowned with laurels and glory, during the auspicious reign of Charles the fifth. The infirmities of old age, and the fatigues of a long warfare, gave them a just claim to repose; many amongst their number, who had amassed wealth during their campaigns, ardently longed for an opportunity to revisit their native country, in order to spend the remainder of a laborious life, in ease and tranquillity. Their former enthusiasm, the fire of their martial genius subsided, and the severity of their discipline became relaxed, in proportion as they were persuaded of their having fully absolved all the sacred obligations of duty and honour. Add to this, soldiers who were accustomed to bear down all opposition, by the impetuosity of a regular

onset, must be weary of a war, in which they had to combat, not their own species, but the raging elements, which offered many severe trials for their patience, but did not assuage their thirst of glory, and wherein they had more hardships and difficulties to surmount, than dangers or perils to encounter. Neither personal valour, nor long practice in the art of war, could avail any thing in a country, the natural position of which gave a manifest superiority to the most pusillanimous of their adversaries. Lastly, the mischievous consequences of a single defeat, overbalanced the advantages of a long series of triumphs over an enemy, who fought on their native soil and territory.

The case of the rebels was just the reverse of all this. During a tedious warfare, the weak must at length learn wisdom from

the strong; small defeats would make them familiar with danger, and petty triumphs serve to confirm their confidence, and inflame their courage. At the commencement of the war, the Republican armies hardly ventured to face the Spaniards in the open field; its long continuance rendered them more hardy and enterprising. In proportion as the armies of the king grew weary of fighting his battles, the confidence of the rebels was confirmed, by a more regular discipline and practice in the art of war. At length, after the expiration of nearly half a century, masters and pupils departed, of their own accord, from the theatre of action on equal terms.

Moreover, a greater degree of union and consistency was conspicuous in the councils of the rebels, than in the cabinet of the Spanish monarch.

Before they had lost their sovereign, the keys of administration had been lodged successively in five different hands. The indecision of the duchess of Parma, had abused the cabinet of Madrid, and the latter had, during a short interval, ineffectually tried all the various maxims of policy, and arts of government.

The savage ferocity of the duke of Alba, the clemency of his successor Requesens, the artifice and craft of Don John of Austria, the lively spirit and truly Roman genius of the duke of Parma, had diverted the current of the war into as many different channels, and given it as many contrary bearings and directions; whilst the scheme of rebellion was invariably pursued, on the original plan, by that individual, who alone had the capacity to comprehend it with one intuitive glance. The most unluckily cir-

cumstance was, that the principles of their political arithmetic, were ill adapted to the times, when their application became necessary.

Whilst the disturbances were impending, the balance of power was evidently in favor of the Spanish monarch; and nothing more was requisite, to stifle the rising flame of rebellion, than a system of firm and vigorous measures; but the reins of government were entrusted to the weak management of a woman, who held them with a slack and feeble grasp.

When the hurricane of civil discord had actually begun to rage, and the scale of power seem to verge towards an equipoise, both on the side of monarchy, and on the part of the Republicans, a prudent system of conciliatory measures could alone have averted the horrors of war; but the supreme

power was delegated to a man, who was destitute of the only virtues, that would have qualified him for this station.

None of these advantages could elude the vigilance, and escape the penetration of William, who, with indefatigable zeal, was making slow advances towards the accomplishment of his grand undertaking.

But why did not Philip himself repair to the Netherlands in this critical posture of affairs? Why should he chuse to resort to the most desperate remedies, rather than try the only experiment, which could ensure success? There was no resource left, to curb the exorbitant power and insolence of a licentious nobility, but the immediate presence of their sovereign. In the presence of majesty, all the splendor of delegated greatness would be eclipsed, all the influence of subordinate authority

be diminished. Truth, now polluted in her source, flowed with a foul and serpentine current, towards the footstool of royalty; a want of proper correctives, suffered the child of chance to arrive at years of maturity and discretion: his own acute discernment would quickly have distinguished truth from falsehood; his policy, and not his humanity, would have urged him to preserve to the state, a million of her citizens.

It is far more easy to meditate mischief against an absent enemy, than to inflict an injury upon him, when he stands in our presence. At first the insurgents appeared backward to assume their real character, and they endeavoured to gloss over their offence, by the specious plea of espousing the cause of their sovereign, against the usurpation of his Viceroys.

The royal presence at Brussels would

have chased away this potent illusion. They had then been obliged to perform, virtually and substantially, what they had only before promised nominally and imperfectly; or by throwing off the mask, make an open confession of their guilt, and pronounce sentence upon themselves. And how well had it fared with the Netherlands, if his presence had only removed those grievances under which they laboured, without his consent or connivance! How greatly would it redound to his own advantage, had it only served to lead to an enquiry into the application of those sums, which being nominally raised for the purposes of the war, were embezzled and dissipated by the prodigal hands of his servants! What his deputy governors could only extort by compulsive measures, would have been cheerfully and liberally granted to their sovereign.

The same mode of conduct, whereby the former had incurred general odium, and universal detestation, would have simply inspired sentiments of fear and dread towards the latter; for the abuse of original and legitimate power is less grievous, than that of delegated authority. His presence would have redeemed the lives of many thousands of his subjects, even had he not affected to display a greater moderation, than that of a provident and circumspect tyrant: if this had been too much condescension on his part, then the sacred name of majesty alone, arrayed in all its terrors, would have preserved a state in her allegiance, which a violent hatred and contempt of his satellites, had tempted to rebel against her liege lord.

Inasmuch as the forlorn condition and abject servitude of the Netherlands, became

the common cause of humanity, to all such as entertained a just sense of their natural rights; on the same grounds, it is natural to suppose, that the contumacious spirit, and defection of the low countries, would provoke a general confederacy of all crowned heads, in order to assert the integrity of their own prerogative, by vindicating that of their neighbour.

But a jealousy of the Spanish power, overbalanced every consideration of political sympathy; and the first European powers were, either secretly or openly, devoted to the cause of the Republicans.

Maximilian the second, although closely allied with the Spanish house by the powerful bonds of kindred, was reproached, with much reason, on account of his attachment to the cause of the rebels.

By a tender of his good offices, as a me-

diator, he imparted a strong semblance of justice to their complaints; and thereby encouraged their stubborn and refractory disposition, to assume a more lofty and insolent tone.

Under a government better affected towards the Spanish monarchy, William of Orange would have found some difficulty in obtaining such large supplies of men and money, from the German empire. France, without nominally rescinding those conventions subsisting betwixt her and Spain, furnished the insurgents with a leader, in the person of one of her princes: their scheme of operations was conducted with the blood and treasure of France.

The policy of Elizabeth, in affording protection to the malecontents against their legitimate sovereign, was dictated by a just desire of revenge, and by an equitable norma

of retaliation; and although her support was not very liberal, and barely sufficed to avert their approaching ruin, yet it was a most seasonable relief, at a time, when a ray of hope could alone revive their drooping spirits.

In the commerce of the powerful and the weak, honour is rarely found on the catalogue of political virtues: a formidable rival seldom derives any benefit from those nice moral distinctions, which enjoin us to return like for like. Philip himself had proscribed all moral faith from the intercourse of the political world; he had destroyed that chain of moral obligations, which binds monarchs together, and had substituted fraud and dissimulation, as the idol of cabinets.

His acknowledged superiority, far from conferring any real happiness or repose,

was a constant source of uneasiness during his life time; and engaged him in a perpetual warfare, by exciting a jealousy in the minds of others. Europe made him smart severely for the abuse of a power, which in reality he had never exercised in its full plenitude.

If we compare with the disproportioned force of the contending parties, which is apt at first sight to confound us, this whole chain of fortuitous and collateral circumstances, that proved equally advantageous to the one, and fatal to the other, then all that staggered our faith and appeared supernatural, is quickly removed, and nothing is left but the marvellous and surprising: and we have now found a just medium, whereby we can determine, with tolerable accuracy, what proportion of merit and glory falls to the share of the Republicans in this success-

struggle for liberty and independance. Nevertheless we must not imagine, that they had previously formed such an accurate estimate of their own strength, nor that, when they first embarked in this perilous navigation, they knew what course to steer, or to what ports they were bound.

However perfect, however bold and regular it might appear in the execution, yet did this glorious handywork of art, not even exist in the idea of the original artificers, in like manner as the eternal schism of the church, never once entered into the mind of Luther, when he opposed the doctrines of absolution. What a wonderful contrast is displayed in the mean procession of those humble mendicants at Brussels, who, with the voice and attitude of entreaty, sue for a mitigation of their sufferings, as if they were pleading for some special favor; and

the sovereign majesty of an independant Republic, negotiating with crowned heads, as with her own equals, and by an arbitrary decree, disposing of the sceptre of her former tyrants.

Urged by the secret impulse of an overruling destiny, the winged arrow pursued its track, with a sublime flight, and swerved from the direction it had taken when first fledged.

Liberty was engendered in the fertile womb of Brabant, and being snatched in her cradle from the fond embraces of her mother, was transplanted into the happier climes of Holland.

But we must not therefore undervalue this enterprise, because the event did not justify the expectations of the projectors. A more intimate acquaintance with the records of antiquity, and of modern times,

ought to guard us against falling into such an absurdity.

A man fashions, polishes and improves the rough stone, which he finds as chance directs; the present moment is his proper sphere of action: but the revolutions of history are subject to the blind controul of accidental causes. If those passions, that took the lead on this occasion, were not unworthy of the performance which was accomplished through their blind agency; if those energies, and that strange concatenation of single exploits, which produced this wonderful catastrophe, were praiseworthy and meritorious; then we may assuredly derive an abundant source of entertainment, instruction, and profit from this event: and we are at liberty either to contemplate what we admire, as the offspring of chance, or to transfer our wonder to a superior intelligence.

The history of mankind is as invariable in its principles, as the laws of nature; and as simple in its machinery, as the human soul.

Similar causes produce similar effects.

On the same amphitheatre, where the inhabitants of the Low countries appear in arms against a Spanish usurper, their ancestors, the Belgians and Batavians, had heretofore signalized their prowess against the Roman eagle. Like them, impatient of the yoke of arbitrary power, being governed by Viceroys, who adopt a like system of oppressive measures, with the same magnanimous disdain they burst asunder the ignominious chains of servitude, and resolve to try their fortunes in the same unequal conflict. The vanity of conquest, a fierce and lofty spirit, inseparable from a long career of victory, equally distinguished

the Romans of the first century, and the Spaniards of the sixteenth: a like valour and discipline prevailed in the armies of both; the same terror and dismay accompanied the progress of their arms. In both cases, we behold a superiority of force, encountered by artifice and stratagem; and perseverance, aided by unanimity, exhaust the resources of a prodigious power, which was become feeble by partial operations. In both cases, private animosity excites a nation to rise in arms; one man, whose genius well accorded with the spirit of the times, discloses to his fellow citizens the dangerous secret of their own strength, and makes the silent murmurs of indignation burst forth in a furious storm of bloody and atrocious deeds.

“ Bear witness, Batavians, (thus did
“ Claudius Civilis harangue his fellow citi-

“ zens, in the labyrinth of the consecrated
“ grove), do these Romans conduct them-
“ selves towards us as allies and fellow
“ souldiers, or do they not rather consider
“ us in the light of abject and forlorn
“ slaves? We are delivered up to the
“ rapacity of their officers and lieutenants;
“ who, after having preyed upon our vitals,
“ and glutted their appetite for blood and
“ plunder, are superseded by others, who
“ commit fresh acts of violence, to which
“ they give a colouring of false names and
“ specious titles. Whenever Rome conde-
“ scends to send us a Viceroy, we are
“ oppressed by the heavy charges of a
“ numerous retinue, and by a display of
“ arrogance still more intolerable.

“ Those levies are now at hand, which
“ shall make an eternal separation betwixt
“ fathers and children, snatch brothers from

“ their fraternal embrace, and submit the
“ flower and pride of the rising generation
“ to the arbitrary will and pleasure of
“ Rome. Now Batavians! the happy mo-
“ ment for action is arrived. Never were
“ the affairs of the Romans reduced to
“ such a low ebb as at present.

“ Do not be intimidated by the mock
“ shadows and empty forms of those le-
“ gions. Yonder camp contains nothing
“ but pillage and old men. We have
“ battallions of infantry, and squadrons of
“ cavalry. Germany is ours, and Gaul is
“ impatient to be enfranchised from the
“ yoke of bondage. Let Syria hug their
“ chains, and Asia, and the provinces of
“ the East, which are accustomed to the
“ iron sceptre of kings and tyrants. There
“ are many amongst our number who were
“ born, before we yielded a yearly stipend

“ of tribute to the Romans:—Fortune and
“ the gods favour the brave.” Their holy
covenant is ratified by solemn vows, in like
manner as the league of the Guises; like
the latter, they artfully cover themselves
with the cloak of submission, and with the
mantle of a majestic name.

The Cohorts of Civilis swear allegiance
to Vespasian on the banks of the Rhine, in
like manner as the *Compromise* took the
oath of fealty to Philip the second. The
same theatre of action suggested the same
plans of defence, the same subterfuge of
despair. Both of them commit their despe-
rate fortunes to the protection of a friendly
element. In a similar emergency, Civilis
saved his island from destruction, as Wil-
liam did the City of Leyden, by a deluge
of waters. The Batavian valour discloses
the impotence of the proud tyrants of the

universe, as the noble courage of their descendants exposes the grand and magnificent ruins of the Spanish monarchy to the astonished gaze of all Europe.

A like fertility of genius in the respective leaders of both ages, protracted the operations of the war to an unusual length and duration, and rendered the issue of this warfare equally uncertain and ambiguous.

One distinction only obtained. The wars of the Romans and Batavians, were conducted with a spirit of humanity, for they were not contending for religious opinions.

SECTION II.

BEFORE we enter into the details of this grand Revolution, we must institute a previous enquiry into the ancient records of the country, and trace that form of government to its source, which existed at the period of this memorable event.*

The first appearance of this nation on the stage of history, is the awful prelude of its downfall; the fame of its conquerors redeems it from oblivion.

That large tract of territory, which is bounded by Germany towards the east, by France towards the north, and by the North Sea towards the south and west, is generally

* Tacitus. Histor. Lib. IV. V.

comprehended by us under the denomination of the Netherlands; and when the Romans invaded Gaul, was divided amongst three principal clans or dynasties, which deduced their origin, manners and spirit from Germany.

The Rhine formed its boundaries.* The left banks of this river were occupied by the Belgians,† the right by the Frisians,‡ and the Batavians inhabited that island which then effected a junction of both its arms with the ocean.§ Each of these coun-

* *Cæsar de bello Gallico, Lib. I. Tacit. de Morib. Germ. and Hist. Lib. IV.*

† That tract of land, which now comprehends the catholic Netherlands, and the territory of the General Estates.

‡ The modern Groningen, East and West Friesland, a part of Holland, Gelders, Utrecht, and Overysse.

§ The upper part of Holland, Utrecht, Gelders, and Overysse; the modern Cleves, between the Leck and the Waal. Nations of inferior note, were the

tries was sooner or later subdued by the Romans, but the conquerors have transmitted to us an honourable testimony of their prowess and valour. The Belgians, according to the authority of Cæsar, were the only gallic tribes that gave an effectual check to the inroads of the Teutonians and Cimbrians.* All those nations, says Tacitus, bordering upon the Rhine, yielded to the Batavians in point of magnanimity and heroic valour.†

This fierce people furnished a tribute of soldiers; and, like the sword and javelin, were regarded as the instruments of destruction. The Romans freely acknowledged,

Canninefatians, the Mattiacks. the Maresatians, who inhabited a part of West Friesland, Holland, and Zealand, and may be classed along with the former. Tacitus. *Histor. Lib. IV. C. 15. 56. de Morib. Germ. Cap. 29.*

* *De bello Gallico.* † *Hist. Lib. IV. Cap. 12.*

that the Batavian cavalry, was the flower of their army. During a long interval they discharged the important function of bodyguards to the emperors, as the Swiss in modern times. Their ferocious valour appalled the Dacians, when, clad in complete armour, they swam across the Danube. They were the same Batavians, who accompanied Agricola on his expedition into Britain, and assisted him in reducing that island.* Of all the others, the Frisians were the last who were subdued, and the first who recovered their liberties.

The marshy wilderness they inhabited, tempted the avarice of the conquerors at a later period, and enhanced the price of conquest. Drusus, who carried the Roman arms into these parts, conducted a canal

* Dio Cassius. Lib. LXIX. Tacitus. Agricola, Cap. 36. Taciti. Annal. Lib. II. Cap. 15.

from the Rhine to the Flevo, the ancient name for the Zuyder sea, whereby the Roman fleet opened a passage into the Baltic, and from thence through the entrance of the Ems and the Weser, obtained an easy access into the interior of Germany.*

During the lapse of four centuries, we find the Batavians incorporated with the Roman armies, but shortly after the age of Honorius, history consigns their name to oblivion. We find their island over-run with numerous tribes of the Franks, who were afterwards dispersed over the adjacent provinces of Belgium.

The Frisians had disowned the supremacy of a feeble and remote power, and reassumed the character of an independent, nay, even

* Tacti. Annal. II. Cap. 8. Sueton. in Claud. Cap. 1. n. 3.

of an enterprising nation; governed by her own customs, and a few memorials of the Roman jurisprudence, enlarging the boundaries of her territory beyond the left banks of the Rhine. Generally speaking, amongst all the provinces of the Netherlands, Friesland has been the least affected by the inroads of foreign powers, by foreign laws and customs; and during a long succession of ages, has preserved traces of her primitive government, of national spirit and ancient manners, which partly survive down to this very day.

That memorable era, when a spirit of migration had infected all nations, destroyed the ancient governments of these countries: divers forms arose along with divers constitutions.

The cities and encampments of the Romans perished in the universal desolation,

and along with them those numerous monuments of their enlightened policy, wrought by the toil of foreign architects. The mounds were overwhelmed by the fury of their own torrents, and by the depredations of a boisterous ocean. Those stupendous monuments of human industry, the artificial watercourses, exhaled their watery element; the rivers were turned out of their channels; the boundaries of the continent, and of the ocean, were confounded; and the nature of the soil underwent a total revolution along with its possessors. The eternal order and succession of time seemed inverted, and a new history commences with a new generation.

In the sixth and seventh centuries, the monarchy of the Franks, which flourished on the ruins of the Roman Gaul, sub-

jugated the low countries, and transplanted the Christian faith into these regions.

At a later period, Friesland was annexed to the crown of the Franks by Charles Martel, after an obstinate struggle, and the conqueror propagated the doctrines of the gospel, by the powerful ministry of the sword. Charles the Great united all these provinces under his sway, that now formed a part of that prodigious monarchy, which this mighty potentate created, out of the provinces of Germany, of France, and Lombardy. After this huge empire had been disorganized by his posterity, and had been frittered down into several petty subdivisions, the Netherlands became successively tributary to Germany, to Lothrain, and to the Kingdom of the Franks; and they are indiscriminately distinguished by the two-

fold appellation of Friesland and of Lower Lothrain.

The feudal system, engendered in the regions of the North, was imported by the Franks into these climes, and fared no better here, than in other countries, but was strangely vitiated and perverted. The more powerful vassals gradually renounced their fealty to the crown, and the stewards presently confiscated to their own use, those domains which they administered as a trust.*

But these rebellious vassals could not assert their independent jurisdiction without the succour of their clients; and this could not be purchased otherwise, than by creating many subordinate fiefs and investitures. By pious frauds, and donations, the clergy

* General History of the United Netherlands, Part I. Book IV. and V.

became a great and flourishing body, and exercised an independent jurisdiction within their own monasteries and episcopal sees. In the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, the Netherlands were successively dismembered into several petty principalities, the sovereigns of which became tributaries to the imperial crown of Germany, and to the kings of the Franks. By right of purchase, by inheritance, intermarriages, and also by conquest, many of them were again ingrafted upon one original stock; and, in the fifteenth century, we behold the house of Burgundy sovereigns of the greatest part of the Netherlands*.

Philip the Good, duke of Burgundy, had either, by fair or presumptive claims, already annexed eleven provinces to his

* Grot. Annal. Lib. I. p. 2, 3.

monarchy; to which his son, Charles the Bold, added two more by force of arms.

This great accession of territory, rendered the dukes of Burgundy formidable rivals and neighbours to France; and instigated the turbulent spirit of Charles the Bold, to project a grand scheme of conquest, comprehending that vast tract of land which extends from the Zuyder sea and the mouth of the Rhine, as far as the borders of Alsace. The prodigious power of this prince, justified, in a great measure, his wild and daring project. A formidable host was ready to execute his designs. In anxious suspense, Switzerland awaited the explosion of this portentous meteor, which threatened to overwhelm her liberties; but a perfidious destiny turned her back upon him in three bloody conflicts, and the vain-glorious conqueror suddenly disappeared, amidst the

promiscuous heaps of the living and of the dead *.

Mary, the sole legitimate descendant of Charles the Bold, the most opulent heiress amongst the illustrious dames of her age, the unhappy cause of all those evils that befel these countries in the sequel, now wholly engrossed the attention, and inflamed the expectation of her cotempora-

* A page, who had witnessed his fall, and shortly after conducted the victors to the spot, redeemed his corpse from oblivion. His body was dragged out of a marsh, naked, disfigured with wounds, and congealed, and it was recognized, with the utmost difficulty, merely by a deficiency of some teeth, and by his nails, which he used to wear longer than other men. Yet, notwithstanding this evidence, there were many who doubted his death, which is sufficiently proved by a passage in a circular epistle, wherein Lewis the eleventh exhorts the towns of Burgundy to return to their allegiance.—The passage runs thus: “If duke Charles be still alive, and can be recognised, then I fully absolve you from your allegiance to me.” Comines. Tom. III. Preuves de Memoires, 495. 497.

ries. Two mighty potentates, Lewis the eleventh, king of France, as proxy for his son the young Dauphin, and Maximilian of Austria, third son of the Emperor Frederic, appeared on the list of her noble suitors. On which soever her choice would ultimately devolve, he was to be the most powerful monarch in Europe; which now, for the first time, began to be seriously alarmed about the balance of power. Lewis, the most formidable suitor of the two, might have supported his claims by force of arms, but the inhabitants of the Low Countries, who influenced her choice, transferred their votes, from this dreaded ally and neighbour, to Maximilian, whose territory, being more remote, rendered his power less formidable to their liberties. This fatal and deceitful stroke of policy, by a wonderful disposition of Providence,

served only to accelerate those impending calamities, which it proposed to obviate and retard. On Philip the Fair, son of Maximilian and Mary, his Spanish consort, conferred the gift of that prodigious monarchy, which had been founded shortly before by Ferdinand and Isabella; and Charles of Austria, his son, possessed, by right of inheritance, the sovereign jurisdiction over the kingdoms of Spain, of the two Sicilies, of the new world, and of the Netherlands. In these countries, the commonalty were sooner emancipated from the hard durance of personal bondage, than in the other feudal dynasties, and they quickly recovered all the rights and privileges of civil society. The advantageous position of a country, situated on the North Sea, and on large navigable rivers, encouraged an early spirit of commerce and enterprize, whereby

men were induced to incorporate together in cities—industry flourished—aliens were allured by a prospect of gain—and affluence and prosperity were diffused throughout.—However dishonest and illiberal the mechanic professions might appear to the martial genius of those times, the solid benefits derived from thence, could nevertheless not escape the observation of the supreme magistrate. The rapid progress of population, the manifold contributions which they levied, upon natives as well as foreigners, under the various appellations of tolls, house-rent, imposts on roads and bridges, market-dues, and rights of hereditary succession, were such mighty temptations to their rulers, that they could not be absolutely indifferent to the causes from whence they originated: their own avarice became a powerful advocate for commerce;

RISE AND PROGRESS OF

and, as is frequently the case, equal benefits accrued, from a savage ignorance, as from the most judicious and enlightened policy.

In the sequel, they afforded patronage to the merchants of Lombardy—conferred many valuable charters, and an independent jurisdiction upon the towns—whereby the authority and influence of the latter was considerably enlarged.

The petty feuds, in which the earls and dukes were incessantly engaged, against each other, or against their neighbours, induced them to solicit the benevolence of the towns, which latter availed themselves of this circumstance, in order to extort many important privileges in return for the subsidies they advanced.

In process of time, these charters accumulated, in proportion as the crusades rendered the equipage of the nobility more

costly and sumptuous; and a new channel being opened to the European markets, for a traffic with eastern commodities, luxury made rapid advances, and multiplied the wants and necessities of princes. Accordingly we find a sort of mixed government, established in these countries, about the twelfth century, wherein the authority of the sovereign was greatly circumscribed by the influence of the three estates, viz. the nobility, the clergy, and the towns. These orders, which were called estates, assembled whenever the urgent necessities of the province required. Without their concurrence, no legislative provisions were promulgated—no wars carried on—no contributions levied—no alterations made in the current coin—and no foreigners were introduced into the administration of public affairs.—All the provinces enjoyed the exercise of

these charters in an equal degree; in other respects, a difference obtained, according to the local circumstances of the departments. The government was hereditary; but the son did not enter into the rights and power of the father, until the constitutional oath was administered *.—Necessity is the supreme lawgiver: in this constitution, all those wants, for which legislative provisions were enacted, were of a commercial nature. Accordingly, commerce was the key-stone of this Republican government, and its laws are of a later date than its manufactures. The last article in the constitution, whereby foreigners are excluded from the exercise of high offices, is the natural result of the foregoing premises. A relation, so complex and artificial, as that of sovereign and subject, which varied in every province, nay, often-

* Grotius, Lib. I. 3.

times in one single town, required men, who combined the most patriotic zeal for the conservation of these wide-spread interests, with an accurate knowledge of the same.

In a foreigner, such qualifications seldom meet together. But this legislative provision likewise obtained in each individual province, so that no Fleming could exercise an office in Zealand, and no native of Holland could find employment in Brabant; nay, it continued in force, even after all these provinces were united under one Sovereign.

Above all, Brabant enjoyed, in full measure, the choicest sweets and blessings of liberty. Its privileges were held in such high estimation, that many mothers, when far advanced in a state of pregnancy, repaired to this country, in order to deposit here the

fruit of their womb; that their children might become partakers of its chartered rights; in like manner, says Strada, as plants, engendered in an inhospitable climate, are improved and meliorated in a more genial soil. After the house of Burgundy had reduced many provinces under its sway, the separate provincial assemblies, which had been hitherto independent tribunals, were referred to the supreme court of judicature at Mecklin, which incorporated all these different members into one body, and decided in all cases whatsoever, both civil and criminal, without appeal. The independent sovereignty of the provinces was abolished, and the senate at Mecklin became the presence chamber of Majesty.

After the demise of Charles the Bold, the estates presently began to avail themselves of the forlorn condition of the

Duchess, who was alarmed by the hostile preparations of France, and absolutely lay at the mercy of that power.*

The estates of Holland and Zealand compelled her to sign a charter, whereby they reserved to themselves the exercise of the most weighty and valuable privileges. The insolence of the natives of Ghent rose to such a pitch, that some of the favorites of Mary, who had the ill fortune to displease them, were dragged by main force into the royal presence, and beheaded before her eyes. During the short period of her administration, previous to the consummation of her nuptials, the common-wealth acquired such a share of power and authority, as nearly to assume the form and spirit of a Republic. After the death of his consort,

* • Memoires de Philippe de Comines. Tom. I.
Page 314.

Maximilian seized the reins of administration during the minority of his son.

The estates highly resented this invasion of their prerogative, and did not formally acknowledge his authority, but would only allow him to assume the title of Viceroy *ad interim*, after he had previously subscribed certain conditions, with the sanction of a solemn oath. After his accession to the dignity of King of the Romans, Maximilian vainly imagined that he could violate this constitution. He loaded the country with additional taxes, heaped honours and preferments upon natives of Germany and Burgundy, and introduced foreign troops into the provinces. But the jealousy of his subjects kept pace with the power of their sovereign.

The populace flew to arms when he made his solemn entry into the town of Bruges.

attended by a numerous retinue of foreigners, seized his person and kept him a close prisoner in the castle. Notwithstanding the powerful intercession of the Roman and Imperial courts, he was not set at large before ample security was given for the performance of the stipulated conditions. The strict faith and honour manifested in the protection of persons and property, being derived from the happy influence of mild laws, and an equitable administration of justice, assisted the efforts of industry and ingenuity. Having always to contend with the ocean, and with the outlets of rapid rivers, which committed incessant depredations upon the level part of the country, the fury of which could not be otherwise repelled than by mounds and canals: this people was early initiated in the useful study of natural causes, being accustomed to face,

with intrepidity, a boisterous element; and, like the ancients, deriving wholesome lessons from the Nile, they employed their ingenuity and powers of invention, in constructing artificial bulwarks.

The natural fertility of the soil, equally favorable to agriculture and pasturage, greatly encouraged population. An advantageous position on the sea, and on the large navigable rivers of France and Germany, which here, for the most part, empty themselves into the ocean; a vast number of artificial canals, made navigation flourish, and the intercourse of the interior being greatly facilitated thereby, a spirit of commerce soon prevailed amongst these nations.

The neighbouring shores of Britain and of Denmark, were the first coasts which their ships explored. The English wool

which they imported on their return, kept in constant employ many thousands of industrious manufacturers at Bruges, Ghent, and Antwerp; and, as early as the middle of the twelfth century, cloths of Flemish manufacture were generally worn throughout France and Germany. As early as the eleventh century, we find Frisian ships in the Belt, nay, even in the Levant. This enterprising nation had conceived the daring project of steering under the North-pole, without a compass, as far as the northern point of Russia.*

From the Vindovian towns, the low countries had derived a share in the Levant trade, which was then carried on, from the Black sea, through the Russian empire to the Baltic. When this trade was verging

* Fischer's History of German Commerce, Vol. I.
Page 447.

towards a decline, the Crusades having opened a new passage to the Indian commodities through the Mediterranean, after the Italian towns had monopolized this lucrative branch of commerce, and the great Hansa association was formed in Germany, then the Netherlands became the principal staple for the commercial intercourse of the North and South. The use of the compass was not yet thoroughly understood, and that ancient and tedious practice of sailing along the coasts, still prevailed.

The sea ports of the Baltic were generally frozen up in the winter months, and inaccessible to vessels of every size and description.* For this reason, ships that could not perform the tedious voyage from the Mediteranean to the Belt during the

* Fischer's History of German Commerce, Vol. I. Page 447.

term of one season, sought in preference a place of rendezvous, that formed a central point for all parties. The inhabitants of the low countries, having behind them a vast continent, with which they corresponded through the medium of large and navigable rivers, and having easy access to the ocean on the North and West, by means of spacious and commodious harbours, seemed peculiarly adapted for the general resort of nations, and for the centre of commerce. Docks were constructed in the principal towns of the Netherlands. The Portuguese, the Spaniards, the Italians, Britons, Germans, Danes and Swedes crowded into this country, with the produce of every quarter of the globe. The eager competition of the merchants, depreciated the value of the merchandize; the vicinity of the market was a powerful incentive to industry. The

large negotiations transacted in various coins, introduced a new species of traffic, the dealings in exchange, whereby the capital of wealth greatly accumulated. The rulers of the land, who now entertained a more just sense of their true interests, gave a liberal patronage to the merchant, by the grant of many valuable charters, and guaranteed the security of commerce by the solemn faith of advantageous treaties.

In the fifteenth century, several distinct provinces having been united under one lord paramount, their destructive feuds subsided, and their jarring interests were happily accommodated under one general jurisdiction. Commerce flourished, during a long interval of peace, which their rulers imposed upon the neighbouring princes, by a preponderance of power and authority.

The flag of Burgundy overawed the seas.*

Their enterprizes were conducted with more vigour under the auspices of their sovereign, which made the single efforts of an humble individual, the common cause of a powerful state. By this mighty patronage, they were soon in a condition to withdraw themselves from the Hansa association, and even ventured to molest the trade of this jealous and inveterate rival on the open seas. The Hansa merchantmen being excluded from the Spanish ports, were, however reluctantly, at length compelled to frequent the fairs of Brabant, and to take in stores of Spanish commodities, from the magazines of the Netherlands.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Bruges in Flanders became the staple of

* Memoires de Comines. Lib. III. Cap. V.

European commerce, and the principal market for all nations. In the year 1468, one hundred and fifty sail of merchantmen were registered, which entered at one time into the harbour of Sluys. Independent of the large depots of the Hansa association, there was established here many trading companies, with their counting-houses, many factories, and mercantile families from all quarters of Europe. This was the grand emporium of the produce of the North, for the commerce of the South; and of the provinces of the South, and of the Levant, for the Northern trade. They were conveyed through the Sound in Hansa bottoms, and were transported on the Rhine to upper Germany, or, by land-carriage to Brunswick and Luneburg.

By a revolution, frequently remarked in the progress of human affairs, this sudden

flow of prosperity, was quickly followed by a torrent of luxury and a general effeminacy of manners. The seductive example of Philip the Good, only served to accelerate this tragical event. The courts of the dukes of Burgundy was the most splendid and magnificent of all European courts—Italy itself not excepted. The sumptuous apparel of the grandees, which served as a pattern to the Spaniards in after ages, and was adopted along with other fashions of Burgundy by the Austrian court, descended to the inferior classes of the people who arrayed their bodies in robes of silk and velvet.*

* Philip the Good was too prodigal to amass treasures: nevertheless, Charles the Bold found, amongst other effects of the deceased, a greater quantity of plate, jewels, books, tapestry, and linen, than what three wealthy potentates of those times possessed! and he found, moreover, a treasure of three hundred thousand dollars in specie. The treasures of this prince were scattered over the plains of Granson.

Comines (an author who sojourned in the Netherlands towards the middle of the fifteenth century) tells us, that affluence was succeeded by pride and ostentation. The vanity of dress was accompanied in both sexes with the greatest prodigality. No other nation ever carried the luxuries of the table to such a ridiculous extreme. The promiscuous intercourse of both sexes in public baths, and other frequent interviews,

Murten, and Nancy. A Swiss soldier drew that costly diamond ring off the finger of Charles the Bold, which had long been estimated the largest in Europe, and is still accounted the second jewel in the French diadem; but was sold by the ignorant captor for one florin. The Swiss exchanged the silver they found for tin, and the gold for copper; and tore in pieces the costly tents of gold stuffs: the value of the booty that was made, in gold, silver, and jewels, was estimated at three millions. Charles and his army had taken the field, not like soldiers, who were preparing for a battle, but like proud conquerors, who adorn themselves with the spoils of victory.

that tend to inflame cupidity and lasciviousness, had extinguished every sense of modesty and decorum; and this disorder was not merely confined to the higher ranks of the community; the vulgar herd of females abandoned themselves to such like excesses, without reserve or moderation.*

Nevertheless, are not these revels of intemperance and superfluity, far more grateful to the philanthropic spectator, than the wretched abstemiousness of beggary, or the rude virtue of a savage ignorance, and of a supine lethargy, wherein the remainder of Europe lay entranced. The Burgundian era illumines those dark ages with a cheerful ray, in like manner as a genial summer's day, suspends the dreary horrors of winter.

* *Memoires de M. Philippe de Comines, Tom. I. Lib. I. Cap. 2. Lib. V. Cap. 9. Page 291. Fischer's History of German Commerce, Vol. II. Page 193.*

However, this high spring tide of prosperity accomplished the ruin of the towns of Flanders.

Ghent and Bruges, intoxicated with the rich blessing of liberty, commenced hostilities against Philip the Good, the mighty sovereign of eleven principalities; a rash and wild project, which proved equally fatal in the event. The town of Ghent alone lost many thousands of her citizens, and was obliged to appease the wrath of the conqueror, by a contribution of four hundred thousand florins in gold. All the supreme magistrates of this city, and all persons of high rank and dignity, were compelled to undergo the cruel penance of marching out of the town upwards of a French mile, stript to their shirts, barefoot, and with their heads uncovered, in order to meet the duke. On this occasion, many valuable privileges

were wrested from them ; which was a fatal blow to their commercial interest. In the year 1482, they engaged in a war nearly as disastrous as the former, with Máximilian of Austria, in order to make him resign the power of regency, during the minority of his son. In 1487, the town of Bruges detained the person of the archduke in close confinement; and signed a warrant for the execution of several of his ministers. The emperor, Frederic the Third, advanced towards their territory with a powerful army, in order to avenge the wrongs of his son, and blockaded the harbour of Sluys during a period of ten years, whereby her commerce was totally suspended. In this undertaking, he received the most effectual support from Antwerp and Amsterdam, who had long beheld the prosperous condition of the Flemish towns with a secret jealousy.

The Italian merchants began to find a sale for their silk manufactures at Antwerp, and the Flemish clothiers, who were established in England, consigned their goods to the same market; whereby the city of Bruges was deprived of two important branches of her commerce. Their lofty arrogance had heretofore given offence to the Hansa association, which now forsook them, and removed their magazines to Antwerp. In 1516, a general emigration of all foreign merchants ensued, with the exception of a few Spaniards; but they descended from the pinnacle of prosperity, in the same manner as they had formerly mounted, by a slow and regular gradation.*

In the sixteenth century, Antwerp engrossed all that commerce, which luxury had expelled from her native seat in the Flemish

* Anderson, Vol. III. Pages 200. 314. 315. 316. 488.

towns; and during the reign of Charles the Fifth, became the most lively and flourishing city in Christendom. A river, like the Scheldt, which communicates with the northern ocean by a broad and contiguous outlet, being subject to the same fluctuation of tides, and can convey ships of the largest burden up to the very walls of the city, made it a general rendezvous for all vessels that were bound to this coast. National industry had risen to the highest pitch at the commencement of this century.

By the growth of flax, and agriculture, by pasturage, hunting and fishing, the country people acquired riches; by arts, manufactures and commerce, the townspeople accumulated wealth. Shortly afterwards, the manufactures of Flanders and

Brabant were conveyed to the shores of Arabia, India and Persia.

The mariner of the Low Countries was distinguished by this peculiar characteristic, that he undertook his naval expeditions at all seasons of the year, and never consumed the winter in port.

After the discovery of the passage round the African promontory, and after the Portuguese had supplanted the natives of the Levant in the eastern trade, that deadly blow, whereby the Italian republics had been crushed, made no impression upon the Low Countries: the Portuguese established their warehouses in Brabant, and the gums and spices of Calicut were exposed to sale on the mart of Antwerp.* This city was like-

* The value of the spices and drugs, which were consigned from Lisbon to this place, amounted, according to the computation of Guicciardini, to the sum of one million of crowns.

wise the staple for the West-Indian commodities, with which the Spanish indolence remunerated the industry of the Belgian merchant.

The investments of eastern productions, tempted many eminent mercantile houses in Germany, and, amongst others, those of Fugger and Welser at Augsburg, to fix their residence here. A company of English merchants had established their magazines in this city. In this place, all the various treasures of nature and art were displayed in the greatest profusion. It was a magnificent exhibition of the works of the Creator and of human industry.

Their celebrity was quickly diffused throughout the whole universe. A company of Turkish merchants intimated a desire to form an establishment here, in order to convey the productions of the

eastern world to this market, through the channel of Greece. Their monied transactions, likewise, accumulated along with their trade in manufactures. Their bills were negotiated in every quarter of the globe. It is pretended, that the dealings that were carried on at Antwerp, in the space of one month, were more extensive than those that were transacted at Venice, during the brightest period of her prosperity, in the course of two years.*

In the year 1491, the Hansa association held their solemn convocation in this city, which had been formerly the case at Lubeck. In 1531, the exchange was built, the most magnificent edifice in ancient Europe, which literally fulfilled the proud boast of its inscription. Houses, which about a century

* Fischer's History of German Trades, Vol. II. Page 593.

ago, yielded an annual rent of one hundred crowns, were now advanced in price from eight hundred to one thousand.* The population of the city amounted to one hundred thousand souls. The influx of people, who poured into this town, would almost exceed belief. Two hundred and fifty masts were frequently crowded into the harbour at one time; no day passed, on which the arrivals and departures of vessels; did not amount to above five hundred sail; on market days, they were augmented to the number of eight or nine hundred. Every day, above two hundred carriages drove out of the gates of the city: two thousand waggon loads of goods arrived every week from Germany, France, and Lothrain, without including the carts and vehicles for the transport of corn, which

* Anderson, Vol. III. Pages 174. 343. 549.

were computed at the number of ten thousand. Thirty thousand hands were employed by the English factory of speculative merchants. The government received an annual revenue of two millions by market dues, tolls and excise, which was a much larger sum in those times than in our days. We may form some idea of the wealth of this nation, when we are told that the extraordinary taxes, that were levied by Charles the Fifth, in order to carry on his extensive wars, amounted to the enormous sum of forty millions in Gold *.

The Belgians derived this high flow of prosperity from their chartered rights, and from the advantageous position of their country. A feeble administration of jus-

* General History of the United Netherlands, Vol. II. Page 562. Fischer's History of German Commerce, Vol. II. Page 595.

tice, and the arbitrary power of a rapacious monarch, would quickly have destroyed all those blessings, which a bountiful Providence had showered down upon them in such abundance. The inviolable sanctity of the laws alone guarantees to the citizen the security of his property, and inspires him with that happy confidence which is the soul of activity.

The genius of this people being arrived at the meridian of its glory, under the happy influence of a commercial spirit, and by an intercourse with many nations, flourished in a bright series of useful discoveries; in the prolific womb of affluence and liberty, all the sublime arts were formed and developed. From the happier climes of Italy, which tasted once more the rich blessings of the golden age, under the tutelar genius of Cosmo de Medicis, the Belgians trans-

planted the arts of painting, of architecture, of etching, and engraving, into their native land, which acquired a fresh bloom in a foreign soil. The Flemish school, a daughter of the Italian, with a generous strife and emulation, disputed with her parent the possession of the glorious prize; and both, in conjunction, prescribed laws to Europe, in the common-wealth of the fine arts. It would be superfluous to enter into a detail of all those arts and manufactures, upon which the Netherlands have raised the solid fabric of their greatness down to this very day. The manufactures of tapestry; the art of painting with oil colours; of glazing; nay, even watches and sun-dials, were, as Guicciardini informs us, of Flemish extraction. To their ingenuity we are indebted for the happy improvement of the compass; the several points of which

are denoted by the familiar terms of their language. In the year 1492 the art of printing was discovered at Harlem, and it was so willed, by a sovereign decree of fate, that this useful art should confer the blessings of liberty upon the land of her nativity. With the most fertile genius for original inventions, they associated a happy talent for improving and meliorating those that were extant. There are few mechanical arts and manufactures, which are not either the productions of these climes, or have been carried here to a higher degree of perfection. Hitherto the united provinces had been the most prosperous state in Europe. None of the dukes of Burgundy had ever presumed to invade their liberties; nay, they had ever been respected by the turbulent and ambitious spirit of Charles the Bold, whilst he was forging the chains of

servitude for a neighbouring Republic. All these potentates were early taught to consider the government of a Republic, as the ultimate scope of their ambition; and none of the provinces, subject to their authority, were so constituted as to inspire them with different maxims of policy. Moreover, these princes had no other resources, besides what they derived from the Netherlands: their armies were levied in the country; their revenues were the chearful subsidies, granted them by the Estates. Now the face of affairs was suddenly changed. They were now placed under the authority of a master, who possessed other means and engines of power; who could employ a foreign force against them.*

* The strange affiliation of two such nations, as the Belgians and the Spaniards, so diametrically opposite in their genius and dispositions, could never sub-

Charles the Fifth governed Spain with an absolute sway ; in the Netherlands he occu-

sist for any length of time. I cannot refrain from inserting here, that remarkable parallel betwixt them, which Grotius has drawn, in his nervous and emphatical language. The Belgians, says he, could easily cultivate a friendly correspondence with the neighbouring nations, as the latter were of the same extraction, and were arrived at the same climax of refinement, by treading in the same steps. But the Belgians and Spaniards disagree in most particulars, and whenever they happen to come in contact with each other, the shock produced by this collision, is the more rude and violent. Both had acquired renown in war many centuries ago, save only, that the former had been long disused to arms, in the bosom of peace and tranquillity; and the latter had constantly exercised their martial genius in the Italian and African campaigns. The love of gain breeds pacific dispositions in the mind of the Belgian; but he is no less apt to resent injuries. No nation is less infected with the vanity of conquest, but none guard their property with a more obstinate valour. Hence, those numerous cities crowded together on a narrow surface of land; overstocked by their own population, and by foreign colonists, defended by the sea and by large rivers. Hence it was, that during the lapse of

pied no higher station, than that of first citizen of the state.

eight centuries after the influx of the Northern barbarians, no foreign arms could make any impression upon them. Spain, on the contrary, successively bowed under the sceptre of new masters;—after she latterly fell a prey to the Goths, her ancient character and manners had suffered, more or less, from every invader. Notwithstanding this base alloy and foreign mixture, the Spanish nation is still described as being the most patient of fatigue; the most intrepid in dangers; equally covetous of riches and glory; affecting a haughty and supercilious carriage towards others; devout even to superstition; mindful of past favors; but so intemperate and revengeful when victorious, that it would seem, as if the sacred laws of conscience and of honor, were not binding towards a foe. Not so the Belgian.—He is cunning but not treacherous: being placed in a central position, betwixt France and Germany, he associates the virtues and vices of both countries, in a bland mixture. He is not easily deceived, and is not offended with impunity. He does not yield to the Spaniard in point of devotion: the arms of the Normans could never compel him to abjure Christianity, after he had embraced her doctrines. No heresy, that the church condemns, ever polluted the purity of his faith. Nay, his pious munificence

The servile obedience of the southern parts of his realm, naturally made him slight the privileges of the subject: in the Low countries he was frequently taught to treat them with a becoming reverence. In proportion as his unbounded lust of aristocracy was fully gratified in the former case, and inspired him with exalted notions of his

was so great, that it became expedient to curb the avarice of the clergy by special edicts. Both nations are remarkable for their attachment to their sovereign, with this distinction, that the Belgians raise the fabric of the laws above the head of the monarch. Of all the natives of Spain, the Castilians must be governed with the most wise and cautious policy; but those privileges, which they claim for themselves, they are not willing to communicate to others. Hence it is, that their common sovereign is involved in a perplexing dilemma, and is obliged to divide his care and attention so equally between the two nations, that the superior privileges of the Castilian do not give offence to the Belgian, nor the equal prerogative of the latter, excite the jealous pride of the former. Grotii, *Annal. Belg.* Lib. I. Page 4. 5. seq.

own dignity, the task of descending to the common level of humanity, became more painful and grievous; and confirmed him in a resolution to overcome those obstacles.

It supposes no ordinary share of virtue, to submit, without a struggle, to a power that opposes our favourite wishes: sooner than acquiesce in the decrees of fate, we chuse to convert the blind goddess into a free moral agent, whom we can resist: how much more so, when the freedom of our will is counteracted by the operations of a similar principle.

The exorbitant power of Charles inflamed the jealousy of the Belgians, a passion that is the ordinary symptom of imbecility. They had never, on any former occasion, been more solicitous about their constitution; more scrupulous concerning the prerogative of their sovereign; more diffuse or

circumstantial in their public councils. During his reign, we behold the most furious paroxysms of a republican spirit, and the arrogant claims of the people assuming the shape of an abuse, which imparted a semblance of justice to the innovations of regal authority.

A monarch will ever regard civil liberty as an integral part of his territory, of which he has made a formal surrender, and must attempt a recovery. A citizen is accustomed to consider the power of the sovereign, as a furious torrent, committing depredations on his chartered rights. The inhabitants of the Low Countries, opposed a rampart of mounds to the inroads of the ocean, and a bulwark of chartered rights to the power of their princes. The annals of mankind exhibit a perpetual struggle between aristocracy and liberty, for the posses-

sion of this territorial jurisdiction; in like manner, as the science of nature, displays a uniform strife between solid bodies, and the jarring elements, concerning the boundaries of space.

The Netherlands were quickly sensible that they were become the province of a monarchy. As long as their ancient rulers were governed by no other passion than by a zeal for their welfare, their condition bore a near resemblance to the happy tranquillity of a domestic circle. The restless ambition of Charles the Fifth obliged them to take an active share in the busy scenes of the political world. They now formed a subordinate member of an enormous body politic; their existence was concentrated in the soul of their regent; and their moral agency was totally suspended. As, during his whole administration, he was constantly

verging beyond the boundaries of his proper sphere, and was engaged in a series of political actions, it was of the utmost consequence to him, that he should have an absolute command over the several members of his own body, in order to impart alacrity and energy to their movements. He could not, therefore, entangle himself in the winding labyrinth of their individual organization, nor inspect into the minutiae of their civil privileges, with such a laborious research as their occasions required. With one broad-cast swing of his imperial arm, he quickly demolished the frail cobwebs of a puny generation of insects. It became expedient to render the application of their powers more easy and regular by unanimity. The tribunal at Mechlin had been hitherto an independant court of judicature; he subjected it to the controul of a royal com-

mission, which was established at Brussels, and was the faithful organ of his imperial mandates.

He introduced foreigners into the sanctuary of their constitution, on whom he bestowed the most important offices of state. Men, who had no other patronage than the smiles of royalty, must prove bad guardians of those laws, of which they had a very imperfect knowledge. The extraordinary disbursements of his warlike reign, required extraordinary resources. In open violation of their most sacred privileges, he loaded the provinces with oppressive taxes; the estates, in order to save appearances, complied with what his moderation forbore to enforce by violent measures: the whole series of his administration is a dull recital of pecuniary requisitions, remonstrances, and final concessions. Contrary to the

principles of the constitution, he introduced foreign troops into their territory, levied soldiers throughout the provinces, and involved them in wars, which, if not destructive, were at least wholly incompatible with their interests, and which they did not approve. In his magisterial capacity, he pronounced sentence upon the misdemeanours of a free state, and the dreadful fate of Ghent, loudly announced the grand revolution, which their constitution had lately undergone. Some authors even accuse him of having endeavoured to remove, by stealth, the most important documents of their charters, from those monasteries and archives where they had been deposited; a mean and cowardly action, unworthy of such a mighty monarch, but which affords a clear presumption, that those documents



had filled his mind with serious apprehensions.

The sovereign consulted the welfare of his state, in so far as it was subservient to his views of aggrandizement; the judicious policy of Charles, was not willing to suspend the animal functions, nor destroy the organization of the body politic, when a vigorous exertion of its vital powers became necessary. Happily for the cause of humanity, the opposite schemes of ambition, and of the most pure and disinterested philanthropy, oftentimes lead to the same general result, and the well being of a state, which is the ultimate scope of a Marcus Aurelius, is occasionally promoted by a Lewis, and an Augustus. But the territory of a provident tyrant, oftentimes wears the smiling face of that happy country, the legislator, of which was a sage philoso-

pher; and this fallacious appearance may easily mislead the judgment of an historian. But let him only once remove this fraudulent veil, and he will behold a new scene, that will teach him how little the interests of individuals are consulted, when the monarch prosecutes his schemes of aggrandizement; and what a wide difference there is, betwixt a powerful and a happy commonwealth. Charles was perfectly sensible that commerce, was the vital principle of a state, and that liberty was the main pillar of commerce. He did not violate the sanctuary of liberty, because he required the active operations of the vital principle.

Not more just, but more politic, than his son, he wisely adapted his state-maxims to the moment, and scene of action, and at Antwerp he repealed an edict, which he

would have enforced, with all the terrors of arbitrary power, at Lisbon or Madrid.

That which serves to render the administration of Charles, of great interest and importance in the history of the Netherlands, is that memorable revolution in the church, that occurred during this period, and of which we must give a more circumstantial detail, as it was the primary cause of the subsequent revolt. During his reign, arbitrary power invaded the sanctuary of their constitution, exhibited a specimen of her tremendous art, and in some measure exculpated her own injustice, by inflaming the turbulent spirit of a republican government. As soon as the latter degenerated into anarchy and rebellion, the prerogative of the monarch assumed the most formidable appearance.

SECTION III.

Nothing can be more easy and natural, than a transition from civil to religious liberty. An individual, or a community, who, under the mild influence of a happy constitution, are become acquainted with the dignity of human nature, having thoroughly imbibed the spirit of those laws, which are the supreme oracles of distributive justice, and which they have perhaps framed themselves; their intellectual faculties being more vigorous from constant exercise, and their organs of sense more acute and distinguishing, from a delicious and voluptuous life; whose natural spirit has been exalted and sublimated by internal security and affluence: such an individual,

and such a community, I say, are of all others the most averse to bend under the galling yoke of an oppressive hierarchy, and the most eager to vindicate their liberty. Another circumstance was also favourable to the interests of the new religion. Italy, in those times, the imperial seat of intellectual refinement—where political factions had hitherto raged with unremitting fury — where a torrid zone inflames the blood with the most disorderly appetites—Italy, it may be objected, was the only country in Europe free from this spirit of innovation. But the romantic genius of this nation being enkindled by the genial rays of a serene sky; being alike transported with the magnificent scenery of nature, arrayed in immortal youth and beauty, and with the pleasing sorceries of art; and being pampered with a continual feast of

sensual joys—was happily formed to embrace a religion, which captivates the senses by an external pomp, indulges the fancy in a boundless range over a *terra incognita* of mysteries, and whose doctrines amuse the intellectual eye, by a gay assemblage of images. Now, on the other hand, a community, which the busy cares and drudgery of social life had confined to the narrow sphere of a terrestrial world, that did not stray in a gay paradise of fiction, but moved within a limited circle of definite notions, and neglecting the fertile regions of imagination, was wholly occupied with enlarging the boundaries of reason; such a community is more apt to embrace a doctrine that countenances a free enquiry, does not so vehemently espouse the tenets of mysticism as those of a pure morality, and which is more readily apprehended by rea-

son, than conjectured by intuition:—To speak in plain terms, the Catholic religion accords better with the genius of a nation of artists, and the Protestant persuasion with the dispositions of a mercantile people. Having established these premises, the doctrines which Luther and Calvin propagated in Germany and Switzerland, would necessarily produce a more abundant crop in the happier climes of the Netherlands.

The channel, which conducted them thither, is no other than that, whereby the plague is wafted over from the eastern world, whereby wisdom and folly are smuggled over to us; the channel of commerce—The first germs of this doctrine were scattered abroad by Protestant merchants, who had formed an establishment at Antwerp and Amsterdam. The Swiss and German troops, whom Charles had introduced into

these countries, a vast number of French, English, and German refugees, who sought protection within the liberties of Flanders, from the naked sword of persecution, which was brandished over their heads in their native land, assisted their growth and vegetation.

At that time, a great number of the Belgic nobility prosecuted their studies at Geneva; the academy at Lowen, which was established in the sequel by Douai, not being as yet in repute: the new religious tenets that were inculcated here, were transplanted by the young students into their native soil. These first germs might have been easily smothered in a community, excluded from a social intercourse with foreigners. The confluence of so many different nations into the trading ports of Holland and Brabant, concealed their early

progress from the inspection of government, and fomented their vegetation under the shade of obscurity.

A difference of opinion could easily gain ground, where no common national character, no congenial manners or laws prevailed. Lastly, in a country, where industry was the most illustrious virtue, and beggary the most scandalous vice, an institution, like the order of the monks, which encouraged sloth and idleness, must have long been odious and intolerable. The new Religion, which opposed this institution with the most furious zeal, had consequently this peculiar advantage, that it was in unison with the public opinion. Satires and lampoons, full of the most bitter invectives, the circulation of which was greatly facilitated by the newly-invented art of printing; as also many stroll-

ing companies of orators, who lashed the vices of the age in theatrical farces, or in poetical compositions, did not a little conduce towards undermining the foundations of the Roman church, and towards preparing the public mind for the reception of the new religion.*

Their early triumphs were accomplished with inconceivable rapidity; during a short interval, the accession of converts to the new doctrine was prodigious; but the foreigners greatly over-balanced the national proselytes in point of number. During this mighty schism of the church, Charles the Fifth adopted a system of conduct, which arbitrary monarchs have invariably pursued on like occasions, and opposed the most insurmountable barriers to the

* General History of the Netherlands, Vol. II. see the Note to Page 399.

swelling tide of innovation. That bulwark, which had hitherto formed an everlasting barrier betwixt truth and human reason, was too hastily removed, that the raging torrent could be confined within the boundaries of its native bed. The spirit of liberty, and of a free enquiry, which ought not to have strayed beyond the limits of moral science, being once aroused, began freely to discuss the sacred rights of kings. Having fractured an iron sceptre, they proceeded in the work of destruction, and endeavoured to dissolve the most sacred and legitimate bonds. The study of the sacred writings, being now more general and frequent, whilst it afforded intellectual light and nourishment to the candid votaries of truth, it also administered the most virulent poison to the visionary sectaries of fanaticism.

The righteous cause had been compelled to erect the bloody standard of rebellion, which was attended by a train of mischievous consequences that are inseparable from the lot of humanity. Reprobates, with whom they had no visible communion, save only in the criminal means that were employed, emboldened, by this apparent alliance, joined their confederacy, and both parties were confounded together. Luther had vehemently opposed the idolatrous worship of the saints: every daring offender, who violated the sanctuary of their temples and convents, and despoiled their altars, was accounted a Lutheran. A factious spirit, rapine, fraud and incontinence, wore alike his livery; the most atrocious villains, in the presence of the supreme magistrate, professed their zeal and attachment to this persuasion. The reformation had degraded

the Roman Pontiff to the low estate of a sinful mortal: a famished troop of banditti, impelled by the fierce cravings of hunger, breathe fury and destruction against all the established orders of Society. It is natural, that a doctrine, which appeared to countenance crimes of the blackest dye, should provoke the indignation of a monarch, who had already decreed its overthrow; and it will not appear extraordinary, that he should employ those weapons with which it had furnished him for its own destruction.

Charles, doubtless, regarded himself as absolute sovereign of the Netherlands, since he did not think proper to communicate to these countries, those religious privileges which he had guaranteed, by a solemn compact, to the German empire.

During that period, when a powerful

confederacy of our princes had compelled him to subscribe to the free exercise of the new religion, he lighted up the flames of persecution in the Low Countries by the most sanguinary edicts.

The perusal of the Old and New Testament; all public and private conventicles whatsoever, of a religious nature; all discourses on such-like topics during meals, or in domestic circles, were prohibited under the most severe penalties.

In all the provinces, special courts of enquiry were established, in order to enforce a rigorous execution of these edicts. Whoever harboured heterodox opinions, was, without respect to rank or dignity, instantly dismissed from his employments. Any person, upon conviction of his having disseminated heresies, received sentence of death: the male convicts suffered by the sword of

the executioner, the females were interred alive. Backsliding heretics were committed to the flames. The apostacy of a criminal could not obtain a remission of his dreadful sentence; whoever solemnly abjured his erroneous opinions, was only entitled to a more merciful kind of death.

The feudal tenures of an unhappy sufferer were regarded as confiscated property, contrary to a standing law of the realm, whereby the heir was entitled to a restitution, on the payment of a small fine.

Contrary to an invaluable privilege of a Dutch citizen, whereby it was enacted, that he was not amenable to a foreign jurisdiction, the unhappy delinquents were transported beyond the protection of their native laws, and were tried and condemned by a foreign legislature. Thus religion conducted despotism into the sanctuary of

liberty, and urged it to profane her sacred rites without danger or resistance. Charles the Fifth, encouraged by the progress of his victorious arms in Germany, conceived himself armed with sufficient powers to make the most daring innovations, and began to form the dangerous project of introducing the Spanish Inquisition into the Netherlands. The bare sound of this tremendous institution produced a universal stagnation in the affairs of commerce. The principal foreign merchants were already preparing to emigrate. No purchases or sales were made any longer. The rents of dwelling-houses were reduced; the labours of the industrious mechanic were suspended. The wealth of the citizen was dissipated. A total ruin of this illustrious seat of commerce must infallibly have ensued, had not Charles been over-ruled by the prudent re-

monstrances of his regent, and induced to relinquish his dangerous schemes. The tribunal was admonished to be merciful towards foreign merchants, and the formidable name of the Inquisition now assumed the milder appellation of a spiritual jurisdiction.

But, in the other provinces, this tribunal continued to rage with all that savage brutality for which it is remarkable. It hath been computed, that during the reign of Charles, no less than five hundred thousand mortals have perished by the hands of the executioner, for the sake of religion. On a superficial survey of the arbitrary conduct of this monarch, we are at a loss to assign a reason, why that flame of rebellion, which raged with such fury during the reign of his successor, was stifled and suppressed during his administration. A more sober

and dispassionate enquiry will elucidate this point. The preponderance of his power in Europe had raised the commerce of the Low Countries to such a pitch of grandeur and prosperity as they had never known before. Wafted by the majesty of his name, their ships rode triumphantly into every port: they over-awed the ocean, and concluded advantageous treaties of commerce with foreign powers.

Under his auspices, they supplanted the Hansa association in their monopoly of the Baltic trade. The new world, Spain, Italy and Germany, which, along with them, owned the supremacy of the same lord paramount, might be regarded as integral parts of their own territory, and opened new channels for their commercial speculations. He had, moreover, incorporated the remaining six provinces with the hereditary

possessions in Burgundy, and added an extent of territory, and a share of political influence to this state, which placed it nearly upon a level with the first European monarchies.*

By this policy, he soothed and flattered

* He was also desirous, at one time, to establish a monarchy here; but the essential distinctions that obtained in the provinces, which varied from each other, not only in their constitution and manners, but likewise in weight and measures, induced him to lay aside this design. He might have rendered them a more important service by means of the treaty of Burgundy, in which their relation to the German empire was exactly ascertained. It was stipulated in this treaty, that they were to furnish a contingent towards the common necessities of the German empire, as large again as that of an Elector; in case of a war with the Turks, they were to contribute three times as much. In return for all this, they were assured of the protection of this mighty empire, and all their privileges were to be counter-secured. The revolution that took place under his successor, annulled this contract, which scarcely deserves to be mentioned, because no solid benefits accrued from thence.

their national pride. After Guelders, Utrecht, Friesland and Groningen were annexed to his jurisdiction, all those petty feuds and hostilities subsided in these provinces, whereby their commerce had been hitherto molested; during a long interval of tranquillity, they began to reap the fruits of their industry.

Charles may, therefore, be undoubtedly styled the benefactor of these nations. The splendor of his victories had dazzled, and confounded their senses; the glory of their sovereign, which was communicated to them, relaxed their republican vigilance; the glorious wreath of unfading laurels, which adorned the brow of the mighty conqueror of Germany, of France, Italy and Africa, intimidated the spirit of faction. Moreover, who is there, that is a stranger to the commanding influence of

an individual (whether he be prince or subject) who has once got a firm hold on our admiration. His frequent journeys to these parts, which, according to his own confession, he visited ten different times, overawed the malecontents; the repeated examples of a vindictive and speedy administration of justice, armed the supreme powers with the efficacious aid of terror. Lastly, Charles was born in the Netherlands, and conceived an affection for a people, in whose midst he had passed the prime of his youth. Their manners delighted him; their easy, unaffected carriage and conversation, formed an agreeable contrast with the haughty mien and austere gravity of his Spanish subjects. He conversed in their language, and regulated the œconomy of his private life according to their customs. At Brussels, those cumbersome formalities were abo-

lished, that form an everlasting barrier between prince and subject. No mercenary stranger precluded their approach to the footstool of their sovereign; they obtained access to his person through the medium of their own countrymen, whom he honoured with special marks of his confidence.

He conversed with them in the most affectionate and unreserved manner. His address was winning, his discourse, courteous and obliging. By these small compliances, he secured their affections; and, at the very moment, when his sacrilegious arm was invading the sanctuary of their properties—when his armies were ravaging their fields—when they were groaning under the oppression of his viceroys—and were butchered by his executioners, their hearts were won by the gracious smiles of royalty.

Charles would gladly have bequeathed to

Philip this valuable patrimony of the affectionate regards of his people. With this view, he brought him from Spain, and introduced him at Brussels to his future subjects. During the awful solemnity of his abdication, he recommended these countries to the paternal care of his son, as the richest jewels of his crown, and earnestly admonished him to preserve an inviolable regard for their constitution.

In every particular, that regards humanity, Philip the Second was just the reverse of his father. With the same inordinate share of ambition, he was less conversant with the dignity of human nature, and had formed the most absurd and extravagant ideas of regal prerogative, according to which, men were considered merely as the passive tools of arbitrary power, being liable to the most severe animadversion for every extraordinary exertion of their deli-

berative capacity as free moral agents. A Spaniard by birth, and accustomed to the barbarous discipline of a monkish education, he expected from others the same austerity and reserve, which were become congenial to his own disposition. The lively genius of the Belgians was not more repugnant to his temper and habits, than their privileges were hostile to his ambitious views. He conversed in no other language besides the Spanish, would suffer none but Spaniards to approach his person, and discovered a superstitious predilection for their customs. In vain did the Flemish towns, through which he passed, vie with each other in the pomp and magnificence of the fêtes they gave, in order to commemorate his arrival.*

* On this occasion, the town of Antwerp alone expended the sum of 260,000 florins in gold. Vide Meteren. Vol. I. Book I. 21, 22.

Philip's eye remained sullen and gloomy : his features were not brightened with a single smile of approbation, by all the loud and sincere acclamations of joy. The scheme of Charles wholly miscarried when he introduced his representative to the Flemish. They would have endured his yoke with less impatience, had he never once entered their territory ; but they could read their future destiny in the lines of his countenance ; his appearance at Brussels estranged their affections from his person. The gracious condescension of the Emperor towards this nation, only served to render the haughty carriage of his son still more odious and disgusting. They now beheld with their own eyes, the tremendous author of their calamities. They were disarmed of those terrors by his presence, which absence and solitude would have inspired.

His form and image was ever present to their memory; a frail mortal like themselves. That fatal plot, which he already began to meditate against their liberties, was inscribed in the most legible characters on his countenance. They were duly prepared to meet a tyrant, and provided with the means of resistance.

The imperial crown of the Netherlands, was the first diadem which Charles the Fifth resigned. At Brussels, in the presence of a solemn convocation, he absolved the States General from their oath of allegiance, and transferred it to King Philip his son. On this occasion he concluded his address to his representative in the following terms:—

“ If my demise had placed these countries under your sway, such a valuable inheritance would nevertheless have still

“ given me the greatest claims upon your
“ gratitude. But now that I resign them to
“ you by a voluntary act, now that I antici-
“ pate my departure from the world, in or-
“ der to facilitate your accession to this
“ dignity, I beseech you to discharge that
“ debt to these nations, which you have
“ contracted towards me.

“ Other princes think it a peculiar feli-
“ city, to bequeath that crown to their
“ children, which death is preparing to
“ ravish from them; I am willing to enjoy
“ this satisfaction during my life time. I
“ am desirous to live, and to be a spectator
“ of your reign.

“ There are few who have established
“ such a precedent, and few will chuse to
“ imitate my example.

“ But my conduct will be commendable,
“ if your future life justifies my expecta-

“ tions; if you are constantly swayed by
“ those wise and moderate counsels, which
“ you have hitherto adopted, and if you
“ preserve an inviolable attachment for
“ that holy and orthodox faith, which is
“ the main pillar of your throne.

“ I have nothing further to add than this.
“ May heaven also reward you with a son,
“ to whom you can delegate your power by
“ choice, and not by necessity.”

After the emperor had concluded this address, Philip dropt upon his knee before him, seized his hand, pressed it to his lips, and received his paternal blessing. A tear stole from his eyelids for the last time. All the bystanders wept. It was an hour never to be forgotten.

This affecting farce was shortly afterwards succeeded by another. Philip received the homage of the Estates; the coronation oath

was administered to him, which was conceived in the following terms:—

“ I, Philip, by the grace of God, prince
“ of Spain, of both the Sicilies, &c. do
“ solemnly swear and stipulate that I will be
“ a good and just Lord, in these coun-
“ tries, counties and duchies; that I will
“ truly and faithfully maintain and uphold
“ all those privileges and liberties of [my
“ nobility, towns, communities and sub-
“ jects, which they have inherited from my
“ forefathers; and moreover all those cus-
“ toms, usages and rights, which they have
“ and possess, severally and collectively;
“ and will moreover do every thing, what-
“ soever is the bounden duty of a good and
“ just Prince and Lord. So help me God
“ and all his saints!”

The dread which the arbitrary power of the Emperor had inspired, and the jealousy

of the Estates against his son, are very plainly insinuated, in framing this oath, which was conceived in far more cautious and explicit terms, than that which had been formerly administered to Charles the Fifth, and to the Dukes of Burgundy. Philip was now compelled to pledge his royal word for the maintenance of their ancient customs and usages; a stipulation that had never been exacted before. In the oath which the Estates deposed, no other allegiance is stipulated, than what is consistent with the standing charters of the realm. His deputy governors were to expect submission and support, provided they discharged their trust in a legal manner. Lastly, in this oath, Philip is simply styled the natural Prince and not the Lord or Sovereign, conformably to the desires of the Emperor. A plain proof how little they confided in the

justice and magnanimity of their new sovereign.

After this last business was adjusted, Charles the Fifth abandoned his palace at Brussels, and fixed his residence at a private house, until the time of his departure for his future retreat. There he found an asylum for his ambitious mind, which was not prepared to encounter another storm of adversity.

That invisible Being, who superintends the revolutions of history, is sometimes pleased to sport with the self-sufficient vanity of mankind, and to weigh, in his own balance, actions, to which we apply the epithets of excellent and divine. That remarkable life, which diverted the current of history into a new channel, wherein it was to remain for many ages, was concluded with a tragical and penitential episode. The

mighty labours of many years were crowned with a sorry penitence, and with the ingratitude of an individual, to whose sole emolument they had been dedicated.

Philip the Second ascended the throne of the Netherlands, during the most shining æra of their prosperity. He was the first of their princes, who, on his accession, possessed the integral territorial jurisdiction of these provinces. They now comprehended seventeen districts, viz. the four *Duchies* of Brabant, Limburg, Luxemburg, and Guelders; the seven counties of Artois, of Hennegau, of Flanders, Namur, Zutphen, Holland and Zeeland; the margravate of Antwerp, and the five lordships of Friesland, Mecheln, Utrecht, Overysse and Groningen; which altogether, constituted a mighty and powerful state, that, for stability and opulence, was upon a level with

every other European monarchy. Their commerce had reached the ultimate climax of its greatness. Their treasures were all above ground, but they were more valuable and inexhaustible than his American mines.

These seventeen districts, which, taken collectively, scarcely comprized a fifth part of Italy, and did not exceed three hundred Flemish miles in extent, yielded an annual revenue to their sovereign, not much inferior to what Britain formerly contributed, before her monarchs had annexed the ecclesiastical domains to the crown lands.

Three hundred and fifty towns, engaged with restless activity in the pursuits of labour, and of a voluptuous life; many of them impregnable without ramparts, and inaccessible without bulwarks; of considerable boroughs, three thousand and six hundred; of petty villages, manors and strong

castles, a countless number, imparted to this empire the chearful aspect of one individual and flourishing district.

The nation had now ascended the meridian of its glory; by industry and affluence the genius of the citizen was exalted, his reason enlightened, his affections ennobled. The florid bloom of the country communicated a kindred bloom and vigour to the fair productions of the mind. A happy temperature of blood, produced by the asperity of a bleak climate, modulated the rage of the passions; equanimity, sobriety, and exemplary patience, the invaluable gifts of the northern climes; integrity, justice and candour, the necessary virtues of their profession, and the amiable offspring of liberty, truth, benevolence, and a fierce patriotic spirit, were blended together in the composition of their character,

with some portion of human frailties. No nation in the universe is more easily governed by wise and moderate counsels, nor is any more averse to the faithless policy of arbitrary power. The voice of the people does no where pass sentence upon their rulers, in such a clear and unequivocal manner; on this amphitheatre, a liberal and enlightened policy can exhibit the most sublime specimens of art, and a selfish, degenerate despotism is sure to meet with the most formidable opposition.

A state, thus constituted, could display the most miraculous energies, if a sudden emergency aroused her latent powers to action, if a wise and provident administration unlocked the floodgates of her resources.

Charles the Fifth bequeathed to his successor, a share of power in these provinces, not much inferior to that of a limited mo-

narchy. Regal prerogative had acquired a visible ascendancy over Republican influence, and the movements of this complex machinery could now be conducted with as much ease and rapidity, as those of an absolute government. A numerous nobility, whose power had been heretofore predominant, cheerfully accompanied their sovereign in his wars, or courted the benevolence and gracious smiles of Royalty in the civil charges of the state.

The ingenious policy of the crown had devised a new species of imaginary wealth, of which she had the exclusive gift and monopoly. An upstart race of passions, and other ideas concerning fortune, proscribed the barbarous simplicity of republican virtue. Pride was supplanted by vanity, liberty by honour, a needy independance by a smiling and affluent servitude: To enslave

their country as the absolute representatives of an absolute monarch, was a far more powerful temptation to the avarice and ambition of the Grandees, than to share along with their master a poultry dividend of the sovereignty, in the general assembly of the States. Moreover, a considerable part of the nobility laboured under pecuniary embarrassments.

As if he were willing to confer special honours upon them, Charles the Fifth had crippled all his formidable vassals, by sumptuous and cumbersome embassies. Thus, William of Orange was dispatched to Germany with the Imperial crown, and the count of Egmont was sent to England, in order to conclude the marriage contract with queen Mary. In the sequel, both of them accompanied the duke of Alba to France, in order to establish a treaty of

amity, and to effect an alliance betwixt their monarch and madam Elizabeth. The expences of this journey amounted to three hundred thousand florins, towards which the king did not contribute a single mite. When the prince of Orange succeeded the duke of Savoy, as generalissimo of the armies, he was obliged to defray all the expences connected with this dignity. When foreign ambassadors or princes came to Brussels, the inhabitants of the Low Countries were under the necessity of supporting the majesty of their monarch, who always took a solitary repast, and never gave public entertainments.

The Spanish policy had devised a still more ingenious contrivance, in order to expatriate the most wealthy families. Every year, one of the Spanish grandees made his appearance at Brussels, where he lived

in such splendour, and displayed such munificence, that he anticipated his revenues. At Brussels, it would have been accounted the greatest opprobrium to have yielded the precedence to a foreigner in this particular. Every one strove to outshine him, and their fortunes were dissipated by this vain rivalry; whilst the Spaniard made a timely retreat to his native country, where, by a rigid œconomy of four years, he retrieved the waste and prodigality of one twelvemonth. It was the foible of the Belgian nobility, to vie with every foreigner in parade and magnificence, and the government knew how to profit by this circumstance.

Nevertheless, these arts did not eventually prove so advantageous as they had presumed; these pecuniary incumbrances prepared the minds of the nobility for

innovations; because in the general wreck, he, who has already lost every thing, has all to gain, and nothing to lose.

It was very natural that the clergy should be the main pillars of regal prerogative. The bright æra of their prosperity was coeval with the age of mental darkness, and in like manner as the monarch, they raised the fabric of their greatness upon ignorance and voluptuousness. Abject servitude renders the consolations of religion more necessary and indispensable; a blind acquiescence in the prerogative of a tyrant prepares the minds for a blind and superstitious faith, and hierarchy repays with usury the services of despotism. In parliament, the bishops and prelates became zealous advocates for majesty, and were always ready to sacrifice the interests of the citizen, to the emolument of the church, and to the poli-

tical views of the monarch. Brave and numerous garrisons over-awed the towns, which were moreover at variance with each other, owing to religious feuds, and the warfare of factions. How little was therefore wanting to support this preponderance! and what a fatal mistake must not have been committed in order to lose it.

How great soever the influence of Philip might be in these provinces, the Spanish monarchy had acquired an equal preponderance in every other quarter of Europe. No state durst enter into any competition with Spain. France, her most formidable rival, was exhausted by a destructive warfare, and by intestine factions, which exalted their heads, under the feeble administration of a minor; and was approaching with rapid strides towards that fatal catastrophe, when this country became the theatre of

the most enormous crimes, and of the most dreadful calamities. In England, Elizabeth had hitherto been scarcely able to defend her tottering throne, against the furious assault of factions, or to guard her new church establishment against the insidious arts of the old religion. Her kingdom still expected her mighty fiat, in order to emerge from that obscurity in which it lay, and to display the vital energies, which it afterwards borrowed from the injudicious policy of a vanquished rival.

The imperial dynasty of Germany, was closely allied to the Spanish house, by the powerful bonds of blood and political interest; and the attention of the house of Austria, was diverted from the regions of the west, towards the eastern part of Europe, by the victorious progress of Soliman: gratitude and fear fixed the Italian princes in

the interests of Philip, and the conclave was governed by his creatures. The monarchies of the North, were still wrapt in night and obscurity, or they had just begun to vindicate their political existence, and were excluded from the federal system of European monarchies. The most consummate generals, numerous armies, accustomed to victory, a formidable navy, the golden harvests that were annually imported from the West Indies; all these were powerful and irresistible engines, had they been wielded by the firm grasp of a spirited monarch. Under such auspicious stars did Philip commence his reign!

Before we examine the transactions of his reign, we must first explore the inmost recesses of his soul, and there we shall discover the secret clue to his subsequent political life. Joy and benevolence were wholly

wanting in the composition of his character. His early habits of education, and the temperature of his blood, suppressed the influence of the former affection: the latter was not likely to be produced by a commerce with men, who had dissolved all the tender and affectionate bonds of humanity; the vacuity of his mind was wholly engrossed by two ideas, a narrow, selfish principle, and the idea of a superior intelligence. Egotism and Religion were the summary contents and title-page to the history of his life. He was a monarch and a christian, and equally defective in both these characters: in the former case, because his intellectual eye constantly soared above, and never descended beneath the limits of his own sphere. His religious creed was gloomy and unmerciful, because his deity was a tremendous being: he

had nothing to hope from his benevolence, but much to apprehend from his anger. To an humble individual, the Divine Nature appears cloathed in the amiable attributes of mercy and salvation; to him it appeared surrounded with all the terrors of a horrible apparition, which suspended and circumscribed the exercise of his terrestrial omnipotence. His veneration for this Being, was the more profound and exalted, as no mortal possessed any share in his regards. He worshipped the Almighty with fear and trembling, because the Almighty alone was capable of inspiring him with sentiments of terror.

Charles was an enthusiast in the cause of Religion, because she was subservient to his views; Philip, because she was the main pillar of his faith. For the sake of a single heresy, Charles devoted many

thousands of victims to the fury of the flames and of the sword; by violating the sanctity of the Roman Pontiff, he ridiculed that doctrine which he had endeavoured to establish by the effusion of human blood. Philip entered with the greatest diffidence and reluctance upon a most legitimate war with the Pope, and cheerfully abandoned all the acquisitions of his victorious arms, in like manner as a repentant criminal makes a restitution of his spoil. The tyranny of the emperor was deliberate and systematic—that of his son, was purely sentimental.

The former possessed a mighty and capacious soul; but was, perhaps, for this very reason, the worst man of the two: the mind of the latter was narrow and illiberal, but was, however, more just and equitable.—Nevertheless, methinks, both these men

might have been less culpable; and yet, upon the whole, have pursued the same system of measures. What we frequently ascribe to the moral agency of an individual, is oftentimes nothing more than the infirmity and unhappy subterfuge of human nature. A monarchy, of such unwieldy dimensions, was a too powerful temptation to human pride, a too mighty task for the limited powers of humanity. To reconcile the idea of universal happiness with the most perfect liberty, is alone within the competence of that infinite mind, which can equally communicate its presence to all modes of being throughout the universe. But what course does a man pursue, when acting as the deputy and representative of his Maker? A man endeavours to remedy the circumscribed condition of his nature by classification; and imitating

the example of a natural historian, he establishes certain symbols, and characteristic distinctions, to which all individuals must conform; whereby he supplies the defect of a comprehensive survey, and enlarges the limited sphere of his apprehension: all this is accomplished by religion. She finds hope and fear implanted in every human breast; by acquiring an ascendancy over those passions, by diverting these affections towards a single object, she virtually transforms the free moral agency of many millions into one abstract essence. The mind of the monarch is no longer perplexed by the infinite variety of human wills.

There is now a general criterion of moral excellence and deformity, which he can display or remove at pleasure, and which

perfectly co-operates with his views, even there where his presence is withdrawn.

An eternal barrier is now formed, whereby the progress of liberty is arrested: an awful and sacred line is now drawn, in which all the eccentric motions of the human will must finally coincide. The ultimate object of despotism and of priestcraft, is uniformity; and uniformity is a powerful auxiliary to human imperfection. Philip necessarily became a greater tyrant than his father, because his genius was more narrow and circumscribed; of course he was obliged to adhere to general rules with a more scrupulous observance, because he could not descend to the endless modifications of a subordinate species of individuals.

Now, what general corollary can we draw from all these premises?

Philip the Second endeavoured to intro-

duce uniformity into the sanctuary of religion, as well as of the constitution, because he could not govern without this principle. —Nevertheless, he would have displayed a greater degree of moderation and clemency, upon his accession to the throne, had he commenced his reign at a more early period. In the general opinion that has been formed concerning this monarch, one circumstance seems to have been omitted, which is of considerable importance in the secret history of his moral and intellectual qualities. Philip had almost completed the thirtieth year of his age, before he ascended the Spanish throne, and the ripeness of his judgment had long anticipated the maturity of manhood. A mind like his, that was conscious of its own strength, could scarcely brook a servile state of subjection ;—the superior genius and ascend-

ancy of that great monarch his father, was an intolerable burden to the self-sufficient pride of the son: the active share he was permitted to take in the administration of the empire, was just enough to disengage his mind from the influence of meaner passions, and to confirm the severe austerity of his character; but it likewise served to inflame his thirst of arbitrary power. When he came into the actual possession of his dignity, it had already lost the charms of novelty.

The happy illusion of a young monarch, when he first tastes the pleasures of royalty, that pleasing reverie wherein he is entranced, which makes the soul alive to tender and benevolent impressions, from whence the human species has derived many benefits and valuable institutions; this happy revelation in Philip's life had already elapsed,

or had perhaps never taken place. His character was already steeled to a sufficient degree of consistency, and his firm and steady principles withstood the genial sallies of benevolence. A probationary term of fifteen years had been allotted him for preparing his mind for this grand revolution; and, instead of betraying any symptoms of a juvenile levity in his elevation—instead of being intoxicated by the delusive charms of royalty during the early period of his reign—he preserved a sufficient degree of gravity and composure, to exert his prerogative in its full plenitude, and, by exercising it to the utmost extent, he made himself ample amends for this long term of probation.

No sooner did Philip the Second behold himself securely established in the possession of his hereditary kingdoms, by the

peace of Chateau Cambresis, than he wholly applied his mind to the pursuit of his favourite scheme, of regenerating the church establishment, and thus realized the apprehensions of his Belgian subjects.

Those edicts, which his father had promulgated against heretics, were now put in force with the utmost rigour; and iniquitous tribunals, which possessed all the essential attributes of an inquisition, except her name, guaranteed the execution of these sanguinary decrees. But he conceived, that he only partially accomplished his purpose, as long as the Spanish inquisition was not introduced into these kingdoms in her genuine form—a scheme, which had already miscarried, during the reign of his father.

This Spanish inquisition is an institution of a peculiar cast and order, of which we find no archetype in the revolution of former

ages, and which cannot be compared with any spiritual or temporal jurisdiction whatsoever. At all times there have been inquisitions, whenever Reason, with unhallowed feet, invaded the sanctuary of Religion, wheresoever a spirit of scepticism and innovation prevailed: but it was first towards the middle of the thirteenth century, after some symptoms of apostacy had alarmed the jealousy of a vigilant hierarchy, that Innocent the Third erected a special tribunal to try religious causes, and thus dismembered, in an arbitrary manner, the ghostly instruction and discipline of the clergy, from their judicial and inquisitorial capacity. In order to rest assured, that the gentle voice of nature, and the tender sentiments of humanity, would not relax or mitigate the stern severity of its sanguinary edicts, he excluded the bishops and the

secular clergy from a share in this tribunal, who were too much attached to the cause of humanity, by the bonds of civil life; and placed it wholly in the hands of monks, a mis-begotten race of mortals, who had renounced all the gentle affections of nature, and had prostituted their services to the Roman See. Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal and France, acknowledged the supremacy of this tribunal. A monk, of the order of St. Francis, assisted at that tremendous court of enquiry, which flaminated the dreadful sentence against the knights templars; a few states only were excepted from its jurisdiction, or succeeded in placing it under the controul of the civil powers. Previous to the reign of Charles the Fifth, the Netherlands had enjoyed an exemption from this dreadful plague; their bishops exercised the ghostly discipline of

the church; and, in extraordinary cases, they had recourse to foreign tribunals: the French provinces made their appeals to Paris, and the German districts, to Cologne.

But the inquisition, of which we are now speaking, being engendered in the West of Europe, was dissimilar in its origin, and of quite another shape and complexion. In Grenada, the last imperial throne of the Moors, had been overwhelmed with a tremendous concussion; and the fortunes of Christianity prevailed over the idolatrous worship of the Saracens. But, during the infancy of this primitive Christian monarchy, the doctrines of Christianity were hitherto but imperfectly established, and, amidst the impure association of heterogenous laws and customs, the Religions had not been separated nor sublimated. The flaming

sword of persecution had, indeed, expatriated many thousands of families, and driven them to the African shores; but a far greater number, rather than endure an eternal absence from the land of their nativity, redeemed themselves from this cruel hardship, by the farce of a dissembled conversion, and continued to offer up oblations to Mahomet and Moses on Christian altars. As long as the votaries of religion turned their faces towards Mecca, the kingdom of Grenada was not subdued; as long as the new Christian proselyte continued to be a Turk, or a Mussulman, within the sanctuary of his own household, his fidelity to the throne, and to the Roman See, was equally precarious. It was no substantial reformation to have forced upon this refractory people the external forms of a new persuasion, or to have attached them to the

new church, by the weak appendages of outward ceremonies: it became expedient, to eradicate the principles of the ancient religion, and to overcome those inveterate prejudices, which, by the slow progressive operation of many ages, had been closely interwoven with their manners, their language, and their laws, and had remained in force and energy, by the secret influences of their soil and atmosphere. If the church were desirous to gain a signal triumph over infidelity, and to secure her new acquisitions from apostacy, by an unalienable tenure, she had no other resource than to undermine those fundamental pillars upon which the ancient faith was established, and to deface the whole form of that moral character to which it closely adhered: it was requisite to enucleate its radical involutions from the inmost recesses

and winding labyrinth of the soul, to expunge every trace and lineament thereof from the sphere of civil and domestic life, to banish from the mind the images of memory, nay, if possible, to destroy the sensitive faculty of receiving impressions. Our country, our family, our conscience, and our honour, the sacred affections of nature and of society, are always the primitive and original stock on which religions are engrafted, from which they derive, and to which they communicate energy. This union was now to be dissolved; the ancient religion was to be torn asunder from the sacred affections of nature, although this violent operation should prove fatal to those holy sentiments. Thus that inquisition was reared, which, in order to distinguish it from the more humane tribunals, that bear the same title, we have denominated the Spanish inquisition.

The founder of this institution was the Cardinal Ximenes. Torquemada, a dominican friar, opened her dreadful sessions with great solemnity, promulgated her statutes, and bequeathed to his whole order the everlasting malediction of human kind. The tremendous engine of despotism and hierarchy, soon became the powerful instrument of avarice. The enormous sums, that flowed into the royal exchequer from the confiscated domains, were a too mighty temptation to Ferdinand. The inquisition furnished him with a key to the coffers of all his subjects, in like manner as it was the organ of his power, and the indissoluble bond, whereby the great and the powerful were enchained to the throne of majesty. This tribunal was reared upon everlasting foundations, because it was sustained by the irresistible energies of those two leading passions that are predominant in our nature.

The grand object, which this institution proposed to accomplish, was to bring reason under the thralldom of a superstitious faith, and to destroy the freedom of the mind by a dull uniformity; the mighty engines which she employed were terror and dismay. She explored the inmost recesses of the thoughts, and her jurisdiction extended over the invisible empire of the mind. All the passions were enlisted under her banners. Friendship, conjugal love, and all the sacred affections of nature, were rendered subservient to her purposes: her snares lurked in the cup of pleasure, and embittered all the comforts of social life. There, where she could not introduce her emissaries, she held the conscience in subjection by terror; a secret pre-sentiment of her omnipresence fettered the freedom of the will, even in the winding labyrinth of the soul. All the senti-

ments of humanity were over-awed, and subject to the controul of an arbitrary creed; an heretic could no longer make any appeal to the equitable tribunal of his own species: on the least symptom of infidelity, all those sacred bonds, whereby he was attached to humanity, were suddenly snapt asunder. That wholesome and instinctive horror, with which the Author of our being has wisely armed us against crimes of the blackest dye, was now sacrilegiously converted, by the priestcraft, to their own base purposes; a modest scruple, concerning the infallibility of the pope, was liable to as severe animadversion as the most enormous crimes, such as parricide and sodomy. No destiny whatsoever could remove their victims beyond the reach of their persecution: they wreaked their vengeance upon the dead, and upon pictures; nay, even the grave it-

self did not afford an asylum from the arm of the inquisition; and the guilt of the fathers was visited upon their descendants, through many generations.

The impiety of the judgments that were uttered, was only surpassed by the savage barbarity with which they were carried into execution. This tribunal appals the senses, by a strange assemblage of new and infernal horrors, derived from those hideous phantoms that dwell in a distempered and puerile imagination, and aggravates the dismay of the present moment, with all the fantastic imagery of the world to come. By associating the ridiculous along with the terrible, and by amusing the eye with the curious pageantry of the procession, it diminishes the effect of pity, by the powerful stimulus of an opposite affection. Sympathy is drowned in derision and

contempt. The criminal is conducted, in solemn state, to the place of execution: a purple and bloody banner is waved before him; the procession moves slowly onwards, accompanied by loud peals from all the bells: the priests, arrayed in their robes of office, advance foremost, and chaunt a sacred anthem.

Next follows the unhappy victim, gorgeously apparelled in yellow robes, on which black and diabolical figures are painted. On his head, he bears a paper cap, to which is tagged the figure of a man: livid flames of fire roll about this phantom: hideous dæmons hover over its head. The image of his crucified Redeemer is carried reversed before the son of everlasting perdition; the glorious work of redemption is become superfluous to him. His mortal body is consigned to the fire, and his im-

mortal soul to the flames of hell. His mouth is gagged with a bandage, which precludes the possibility of assuaging his anguish by plaintive moans, of exciting the slumbering voice of compassion by his doleful tale, or of divulging the secrets of the holy tribunal.

Next follow the clergy, clad in festal robes, the magistracy, and the nobility; the holy fathers, who sat in judgment upon him, bring up the rear of this infernal procession. You would suppose that this were some corpse, they were conducting to the grave; but it is the living form of a human being, with whose agonies they are going to feast the eyes of the multitude. These massacres are generally reserved for high festivals, and a certain number of these wretches is crowded together for this purpose in the dungeons of the holy office, in

order to enhance the glory of the spectacle by the multitude of victims: at such times the monarch himself is present. He takes his seat on a chair, somewhat lower than that of the grand Inquisitor, to whom he yields the precedence on such occasions; and who would not tremble in the presence of a tribunal, by which the splendour of majesty is eclipsed!

That grand revolution in the Church, accomplished by Luther and Calvin, made those causes operate again that had given rise to the establishment of the Inquisition, and a tribunal, that had been formerly erected in order to regenerate the Kingdom of Grenada, by the expulsion of a small remnant of Jews and Saracens, was now become absolutely necessary for the welfare of the whole catholic christendom. All the inquisitions in Portugal, in Italy, Germany,

and France, assumed the form of the Spanish tribunal—it followed the Europeans into India, and at Goa a most iniquitous court was established, a bare recital of whose proceedings is sufficient to petrify us with horror. In all those countries visited by this plague, desolation marked its progress; but it hath no where committed such dreadful ravages as in Spain.

Those victims are already forgotten whom she hath immolated; the generations of men are renewed, and those countries flourish again, that have been ravaged and depopulated by her fury; but many ages will elapse, before her vestiges are eradicated from the features of the Spanish character.—She has arrested a generous and enlightened nation, in its progress towards the summit of perfection; has banished genius from a region where it had been

hitherto indigenous ; and hath diffused a mournful calm, and melancholly silence, such as is wont to reside on the tomb-stones of departed souls, over the minds of a people, who were, beyond all others of our hemisphere, mechanically formed for joyous and delightful sensations.

Charles constituted the first Inquisitor in Brabant, in the year 1522. Some priests were associated along with the former, as his official colleagues, but he himself was of the lay order. After the demise of Adrian the Sixth, his successor, Clemens the Seventh, ordained three Inquisitors for the provinces of the Low Countries ; but this number was again reduced to two by Paul the Third, who exercised their functions during the commencement of the disturbances. In the year 1580, with the assent and connivance of the Estates, those edicts against

heretics were issued, that served as a ground work to all subsequent decrees, and in which mention is expressly made of the inquisition. In the year 1550, Charles the Fifth was under the necessity of reviving and enforcing these edicts with additional vigour, on account of the rapid progress of the new sects, and it was on this occasion that the city of Antwerp opposed the establishment of the inquisition, and obtained an exemption from her jurisdiction. Nevertheless, in the Netherlands this inquisition was more consonant to the genius of the country; and more humane than the Spanish tribunal, and was moreover not placed under the controul of foreigners, nor much less under that of Dominican friars.

It literally fulfilled the spirit of those edicts, which served it in the stead of a

standing norm, and were of public notoriety; being, for this very reason, less liable to objection, because, however severe they might be, they seemed less liable to arbitrary constructions, and were not mantled in a veil of mystery, like the Spanish inquisition. But the policy of Philip the Second was preparing to introduce this inhuman tribunal into the Netherlands, because it appeared to him to be the most appropriate vehicle for corrupting the genius of this people, and for rendering their stubborn and refractory dispositions, more tractable and propitious to the usurpations of arbitrary power. He commenced his operations by rigorously enforcing the ordonnances of his father, by enlarging and consolidating the powers of inquisitors, and by making them less dependent upon the civil jurisdiction. Nothing, but a name, and Domi-

nican friars, was wanting, in order to convert this tribunal into a Spanish inquisition. The slightest presumption of guilt was a signal to the arm of justice, for snatching a citizen from the bosom of tranquillity, from his domestic circle; and the most nugatory evidence was his death warrant, and infallible passport to the agonies of the rack. The goddess of Justice no longer extended her tutelar patronage to this unhappy client. Reprobates and fanatics arraigned him at the bar of an invisible world, and tried him by laws that were never framed for human beings. The delinquent was equally a stranger to his accuser, and to the nature of his crime; a wicked and diabolical artifice, whereby the unhappy wretch, in the ravings of the most exquisite torture, or weary of the protracted term of his miserable existence, was com-

pelled to announce misdemeanors, which were never perpetrated, or were altogether unknown to the judge. The chattels of the criminal were confiscated, and the informers were indemnified by a reprieve, and by liberal rewards. No chartered rights, no temporal jurisdiction afforded an asylum against the holy office. He, who came within her grasp, was removed beyond the reach of the civil powers. The latter had no share in the administration of justice, but was only employed as a passive engine for the execution of her sanguinary decrees. The evils resulting from this institution were dreadful and incalculable. The welfare and fortune, nay, even the life, of an unimpeached character, lay at the mercy of the most profligate and abandoned villains.

The irresistible temptation of a sure and

invisible revenge, was now offered to every treacherous foe, to every jealous rival. The security of property was destroyed; the unsuspecting faith of social intercourse was suspended; all the bonds of reciprocal interest were snapt asunder; the ties of blood and of affection were dissolved; the current of social life was empoisoned by the venom of jealousy; the apprehension of an insidious spy, lurking in secret ambush, intimidated the looks, and hushed the tremulous accents of the voice. A man no longer suspected honesty in others, and was himself excommunicated from any claim to this noble virtue. An honest fame; all federal and fraternal associations whatsoever; the sacred obligation of an oath; every thing that is accounted holy amongst mankind, was fallen into disrepute. This cruel calamity befel a large and flourishing

town, inhabited by one hundred thousand industrious citizens, who were united together by the sole bonds of mutual faith and confidence. Each individual, equally necessary and useful to the other, but all equally deceitful and ambiguous. All of them connected together by a spirit of commerce, and disunited by fear. All the pillars of social union were overthrown, where social union was the foundation of existence and duration.

No wonder, therefore, that such an iniquitous tribunal, which the patient spirit of the Spaniards could scarcely endure, should appear intolerable to the independent minds of Republicans. But the terror which it inspired, was augmented by the Spanish armies, that were still quartered upon this country, after the conclusion of the peace, and contrary to the constitution.

of the empire, were cantoned in the frontier towns. This innovation had not excited murmurs against Charles the Fifth, because it was deemed expedient at that time, and because they relied upon his good intentions. These troops were now regarded as the formidable armaments of oppression, and the dreadful engines of an odious hierarchy. A large body of cavalry, voluntarily raised by the natives, was sufficient for the defence of the country, and rendered the services of these foreigners superfluous. The licentious and rapacious dispositions of the Spaniards, to whom long arrears of pay were now due, and who subsisted upon the plunder of the citizens, inflamed the indignation of the people, and reduced the commonalty to the utmost extremity of despair. When the government was afterwards induced, by the general dis-

contents, to withdraw its armies from this country, and to remove them to the islands of Zealand, the insolence of the soldiery rose to such a pitch, that the natives discontinued their useful labours, and neglected their moulds; chusing rather to yield their country a prey to the inroads of the ocean, than any longer to endure the brutal usage of these savages. Philip was desirous to prolong the stay of his Spaniards in the country, in order to enforce his edicts, and to impart stability to those innovations which he was preparing to make in the constitution of the Low Countries.—They guaranteed the tranquillity of the country, and held it in subjection. He therefore employed every expedient, in order to evade the importunity of the Estates, who insisted upon the removal of the troops; and he had recourse to all the various arts

of intrigue and persuasion, to accomplish his purpose. He sometimes expressed his apprehensions of a sudden invasion from France, which was then distracted by a warfare of factions, and could scarcely defend herself against her own intestine enemies: sometimes he was engaged in making preparations for the reception of his son Don Carlos, although it had never been his real intention to suffer him to depart from the kingdom of Castile. The arrears of his soldiers were not to be levied upon the country, but to be paid out of his own treasury. That he might provide himself with a plea for prolonging their stay, he purposely withheld their arrears, although he would otherwise have given them the preference to the national troops, who were already paid in advance. In order to quiet the apprehensions of the nation, and

to appease the general indignation, he made a voluntary offer of the supreme command over his forces to the two favourites of the people, William of Orange, and the Count of Egmont; but the latter declined this appointment, with the generous declaration, that they could never prevail upon themselves to act against the laws of their country. In proportion as the monarch discovered a strong desire to keep his Spaniards in the country, the Estates obstinately insisted upon their removal. In the subsequent assembly of the Estates, Philip, when surrounded by his courtiers, was undeceived with regard to the real truth, by a candid declaration, worthy of the republican spirit.

“ Why are these foreign arms employed
“ In our defence?” said the Syndicus of
Ghent. “ Is it, in order to expose our

“ weakness and incapacity to defend our-
 “ selves, before the eyes of the world? Why
 “ have we made peace, if we must still be
 “ oppressed with the heavy burdens of a
 “ war establishment? During the progress
 “ of the war, our patience was exercised
 “ by an imperious necessity; in the bosom
 “ of peace and tranquillity, we labour un-
 “ der all the calamities of war? Or does
 “ your Majesty suppose, that our powers
 “ are sufficient to restrain the licentiousness
 “ of this disorderly rabble, when your own
 “ presence cannot keep them in awe?—
 “ Those men, that stand before you, are
 “ your own subjects from Cambray and
 “ Antwerp, who complain of their violence
 “ and injustice. Thionville and Marien-
 “ burg are converted into a wilderness,
 “ and have you granted us a peace only

“ that our cities might be destroyed, which
“ must certainly be the case, if you do not
“ deliver us, from this dreadful plague? Do
“ you wish to protect us from an invasion?
“ This cautious policy is laudable, but the
“ rumour of their armaments is only a dis-
“ tant prelude to actual hostilities. Why
“ are foreign mercenaries hired at such an
“ enormous expence, who cannot be influ-
“ enced by any regard for a country, which
“ they must shortly abandon? There still
“ remain many brave national troops, ready
“ to obey your orders, to whom your fa-
“ ther committed the protection of the
“ commonwealth in far more critical times.
“ Why should that loyalty be suspected,
“ which they have inviolably preserved to-
“ wards your ancestors? Are they not in a
“ condition to support the war, till such
“ time as your allies may be enabled to

“ join their standard, or yourself may send
“ them timely reinforcements ?”

Such arguments were so powerful and convincing, that the king was at a loss for some time, before he could return an answer. At length, he exclaimed, “ I am a
“ foreigner myself, why do ye not also
“ banish me from your country ?” He instantly descended from the throne, and quitted the assembly; but the presumption of the orator was overlooked. Two days afterwards, he notified to the Estates, that, had he received a more early intimation, that these troops were an incumbrance upon the country, he would have taken the necessary steps for holding them in readiness to accompany him on his return to Spain. Now, indeed, it was too late to effect this purpose, as they could not be dismissed before their arrears were discharged; but he

solemnly pledged his royal word, that their stay should not be protracted beyond the term of four months. Nevertheless, instead of the limited term of four months, these troops continued in the country during the space of eighteen months; and would, perhaps, have remained there for a longer period, if the exigencies of the state had not required their presence in another quarter.

The arbitrary appointment of foreigners to the most weighty offices of the state, occasioned fresh complaints against the government. Of all the charters of the provinces, there was none more odious to the Spaniards than this, which excludes foreigners from holding important trusts; and there was also none which they were more strongly disposed to abolish. Italy, both the Indies, and all the Provinces of their

enormous monarchy, lay open to the schemes of their avarice and ambition; one only, the most opulent of all, was inaccessible to their views of aggrandizement, being secured by the impregnable bulwark of a sacred law. They convinced their monarch by the most powerful arguments, that his prerogative would never be fully established in these countries, as long as he did not employ foreign tools for this purpose. The bishop of Arras, a native of Burgundy, had been unjustly elevated to this dignity in Flanders; and now a Castilian, the count of Faria, was destined to have a seat and vote in the national assembly. But this project met with a more formidable opposition, than the courtiers expected; and the schemes of arbitrary power were disconcerted by the patriotic

arts of William of Orange, and by the inflexible obstinacy of the Estates.

Under such inauspicious omens did Philip commence his reign in the Netherlands, and such was the nature of their complaints, when he was preparing to leave them! He had long been impatient to quit a country, where he was an absolute stranger; where he found such strong opposition to his favourite wishes; and where such harsh monitors so frequently reminded his arbitrary genius, on the sacred laws of liberty. The peace with France, rendered a longer stay unnecessary; the warlike preparations of Soliman, required his presence in the south, and Spain herself began to deplore the long absence of her monarch. The only consideration, which now engrossed his attention, was the appointment of a viceroy for his provinces. Emanuel Philibert, duke of



Savoy, had filled this station ever since the abdication of Mary, queen of Hungary; but, by the presence of the monarch, it was now become rather a nominal, than a real dignity. His absence rendered it the most important trust in the empire, and the ultimate scope for the ambition of a subject. It was now become vacant by the departure of the duke, who was reinstated in the possession of his hereditary dominions by the peace of Chateau Cambresis.

Philip was greatly perplexed in his choice of a regent, by reason of the extraordinary powers, with which the latter must be vested; the capacity and experience, necessary for such a high and difficult station; but more especially on account of the dangerous schemes, which the government meditated against the liberties of the country, and the execution of which solely de-

volved upon the governor. The dignity of governor was not comprehended in the act of the legislature, whereby foreigners were excluded from the offices of state. As all the seventeen provinces could not, at one and the same time, claim him for their own countryman, it was thought fit that he should not belong to any of them; for a native of Brabant regards the prerogative of a Fleming, whose territory is only half a mile distant from his own, with the same jealousy as that of a Sicilian, who inhabits another soil and climate. But here the interest of the crown, appeared to favour a native of the Low Countries. For example, a native of Brabant, who enjoyed the unsuspecting confidence of his own country, would, in case he should prove a traitor, have already accomplished half his villainy, before a foreigner, unacquainted with the

mechanism of the state, could overcome that jealous vigilance with which all his motions would be watched.

If government accomplished her views in one province, an opposition on the part of the remainder would be an audacity, that would fully justify a most vigorous procedure. In that indivisible body, which was now formed out of the aggregate sum of all the provinces, their individual organization was dissolved; the submission of one, was a standing norm to all the others, and that prerogative, which any subordinate province could not vindicate, was irrecoverably lost to all the remainder.

Of all the Belgian nobility, who could lay claim to the regency, the regards and expectations of the nation were principally fixed upon the Count of Egmont, and the Prince of Orange, who were alike entitled

to this high dignity by the same illustrious descent, by the same shining merits, and by an equal share in the affections of the people. By an eminent rank, both these competitors were immediately placed under the eye of Royalty, and when the Monarch surveyed the most distinguished characters of his kingdom, and was deliberating about a worthy choice, it must ultimately devolve upon either of these two. Whereas, during the progress of this history, we shall have frequently occasion to make mention of their names, we cannot make our readers too early acquainted with the outlines of their character.

SECTION IV.

WILLIAM the First, Prince of Orange, descended from the illustrious House of Nassau in Germany, which had flourished during the lapse of eight centuries, had, for some time, disputed the supremacy of the Austrian dynasty, and had filled the imperial throne of Germany with one of its branches. Exclusive of several extensive domains in the Netherlands, whereby he became a citizen of this republic, and a vassal of the Spanish monarchy, he also possessed the independent principality of Orange in France, which had been bequeathed him by the last will of Renatus of Chalons.

William was the son of a countess of

Stollberg, and was born in the year 1533, at Dillenburg, in the county of Nassau. His father, a count of Nassau, of the same name, had adopted the Protestant religion, and educated his son in the doctrines of that persuasion; but Charles the Fifth, who discovered an early predilection for this youth, brought him to Court, at a very early age, and initiated him in the principles of the Roman church.

The monarch, whose sagacity predicted the future greatness of this boy, retained him about his person, during the space of nine years; condescended to instruct him in state affairs, and honoured him with a confidence far above his age. He alone enjoyed the privilege of remaining in the presence of the emperor, when he gave audience to foreign ambassadors; a proof that he had already begun, in his juvenile

years, to merit the surname of the Discreet, which he obtained in the sequel. The emperor was not even ashamed, openly to affirm, on a certain occasion, that this young man had frequently suggested plans to him, which would otherwise have escaped his own sagacity. What high expectations might not rationally be entertained concerning the intellectual improvement of a man formed in such a school, as also concerning the moral dispositions of his heart; who, although he had been accustomed from his infancy to be near the person of a monarch, had nevertheless preserved his honour and integrity without stain or blemish! William had compleated the twenty-third year of his age, when Charles resigned the reins of government, and had been already honoured by the emperor with two special marks of his esteem. He distin-

guished him above all the grandees of his court, by the honourable commission of being bearer of the imperial crown to his brother Ferdinand.

When the duke of Savoy, who commanded the imperial army in the Netherlands, was recalled to Italy by the exigency of his own domestic affairs, the emperor appointed him generalissimo of his forces, contrary to the remonstrances of his counsellors, who were of opinion, that it was highly injudicious to oppose a stripling to the experienced commanders of France. Absent, and without any recommendation, the emperor gave him the decided preference to an illustrious race of heroes, and the event did not induce him to repent his choice.

The distinguished favors which this prince had received at the hands of the father,

was already a sufficient reason, why he should incur the displeasure of his son. It seems, Philip had set it down, as an invariable rule of conduct, to avenge the wrongs of the Spanish nobility, on account of the predilection which Charles had always manifested towards the Belgian grantees. But he was more strongly influenced by some private motives, which alienated his affections from the prince.

William of Orange was of those wan and meagre physiognomies, who, as Cæsar informs us, are ever wakeful, pensive and scheming, and who inspired the most intrepid and magnanimous of all mortals, with sentiments of terror and dismay. The steady composure of an unruffled countenance concealed an ardent soul, endued with restless energy, which never discomposed that outward vizard beneath which it

toiled, and was alike inaccessible to the shafts of love, and to the arts of dissimulation: it harboured a capacious, fertile and indefatigable mind, sufficiently ductile to be moulded into all forms whatsoever, yet sufficiently cool and recollected, not to bewilder itself in any sort of disguise; firm enough to support with constancy every turn of fortune. No one ever possessed a more admirable talent than William, for divining the characters and winning the affections of mankind; not, that after the fashion of courts, his lips betrayed a servility and complaisance, which his proud heart tacitly disclaimed; but because he was neither sordid nor profuse in distributing the marks of his benevolence, and by a prudent management of those resources, whereby we confer obligations on man-

kind, he constantly kept in reserve a large fund for future occasions.

The conceptions of his mind were slow and tardy, yet noble and sublime; the decisions of his judgment were cool and deliberate, but accomplished with unshaken constancy and invincible perseverance.

The original scheme, which he had once embraced, no obstacles could defeat, no chain of fortuitous contingencies destroy; for he had anticipated them all, before they had actually taken place. Alike superior to the pangs of terror and the tumults of joy, he was however subject to a sentiment of fear; but his fear was a presentiment of danger, and he was cool and intrepid amidst the din of war, because he had felt alarms during a calm interval of repose. William displayed an unbounded

generosity in dissipating his wealth, but a rigid œconomy in the application of his time. The hours of a frugal repast, were the sole intervals of his leisure; but these were exclusively dedicated to his friends, his family, and the cordial overflowings of his heart; a modest repose he enjoyed from patriotic cares. Then it was, that his countenance bespoke animation, and his spirits were exhilarated by the pleasures of the bottle, which was seasoned by temperance and the placid sunshine of his soul, and no gloomy cares durst now intrude upon the vacant hilarity of his mind.

His household establishment was splendid: a numerous retinue of domestics; the rank and dignity of those, who surrounded his person, made his habitation vie in grandeur and magnificence with the residence of a sovereign prince. An elegant hospita-

lity, that grand political engine of a demagogue, reigned throughout his palace. Foreign princes and ambassadors found a reception and entertainment here, far beyond any thing that the opulent provinces of Belgium could afford. A devout submission towards the existing government counterbalanced the blame and odium, which this munificence might have excited as to the rectitude of his designs.

But his liberality secured the affections of the commonalty, who are never so highly gratified as when they behold the wealth of their country exhibited with a vain ostentation to the astonished gaze of foreigners: and the elevated station, wherein fortune had placed him, enhanced the merit of the condescension, which he displayed.

No one was ever better qualified to conduct a conspiracy than William.

A comprehensive and intuitive glance into the past, the present and the future ; a happy talent for improving every favourable conjuncture ; a supreme influence over the minds and affections of men ; prodigious plans, the contexture and symmetry of which were not revealed to any mortal besides their sagacious projector ; bold calculations, wound up in the vast chain of futurity : all which were under the controul and management of a sublime and exalted virtue, that walked at the utmost verge and extremity, with steadfast composure. Such a character would appear incomprehensible to all his cotemporaries, save only to the most consummate judge of the human heart, the most jealous and distrustful of all monarchs of his age.

Philip the Second, at one glance, fully comprehended a character, which, of all

good dispositions, approached the nearest to his own. Had he not so thoroughly divined his character, it would appear absolutely unintelligible, why he should not repose the most unlimited confidence in a man, who possessed, in an eminent degree, those qualifications, which he esteemed most, and knew best how to appreciate. But there was a still more important point of approximation, wherein a resemblance prevailed betwixt them.

William had been instructed in the science of politics by the same master, and there was reason to apprehend that he was the best scholar of the two. It was not because he was conversant with the ideal prince of Machiavell, but because he had profited by the living precepts and example of a monarch, whose life was a practical comment upon the former, that he became

acquainted with those tremendous arts, whereby empires rise or fall.

Philip had now to cope with an antagonist, who was thoroughly initiated in the same political doctrines, and who could employ all the nefarious arts of policy, in the support of a righteous cause. This last circumstance fully enables us to comprehend, why, of all others, he should conceive the most mortal jealousy, and the most violent antipathy against this man. It happened unfortunately, that, whilst the emperor was rearing a beautiful flower for his son, he likewise generated the worm, that corroded its tender blossoms.

The jealousy already conceived against this prince, was greatly fomented by the ambiguous opinions entertained concerning his religion. William remained a faithful follower of the Roman Pontiff, during the

life-time of his benefactor, the emperor; but there was reason to apprehend, that the predilection, early implanted in his tender mind, for the doctrines of reformation, had never been thoroughly eradicated. To what religious denominations soever he might have professed his attachment, at certain periods of his life, it was evident, that he was never perfectly reconciled to any. We behold him, in his latter days, embracing the doctrines of Calvin, with the same indifference, with which he had formerly abjured the Lutheran faith, and espoused the religion of the church of Rome. He rather defended the political and natural rights of the Protestants, than their opinions, against the Spaniards. It was not a communion of faith, but of sufferings, whereby they were united in one common cause.

These general grounds of jealousy were apparently confirmed by an accidental discovery of his real sentiments. William had been detained in France, as hostage for the performance of the articles signed at Chateau Cambresis, in which he had taken an active share; and, through the indiscretion of Henry the Second, who vainly imagined that he had to do with a confidential minister of the Spanish monarch, was made privy to a secret plot, that was carried on betwixt the French and Spanish courts, against the Protestant subjects of the two kingdoms. The prince hastened to communicate this important piece of intelligence to his friends, who were materially concerned therein; and, by an unlucky accident, his correspondence on the subject was conveyed into the hands of the king of Spain. Philip was less surprized at this discovery of William's sentiments, than exasperated at the

failure of his plot: but the Spanish grantees, whose implacable jealousy could never forget, that the greatest monarch of the earth had reclined upon the bosom of the prince, during the last solemn act of his reign, did not neglect this favourable opportunity to alienate the affections of their king from a traitor, who had divulged an important mystery of state.

No less illustrious than William, by a noble birth and lineage, was Lamoral, count of Egmont, and prince of Gavre, a descendant of those ancient dukes of Guelders, who had signalized their prowess and valour against the arms of the house of Austria. The fame of his progenitors is celebrated in the annals of the country; during the reign of Maximilian, one of his ancestors had enjoyed the supreme magistracy of Holland. Egmont's nuptials with Sa-

bina, duchess of Bavaria, reflected additional lustre on his noble birth, and augmented his influence and authority by powerful alliances. In the year 1546, Charles the Fifth conferred upon him the order of the golden fleece; in the military school of this emperor, he reaped the first fruits, and early laurels of his future fame; in the fields of St. Quentin and Gravelingen, he was distinguished as the hero of his age.

Each individual blessing, resulting from peace, which a commercial people enjoys in a supreme measure, revived a recollection of those victories, whereby it had been obtained: and the Flemish vanity, like a fond parent, exulted over this illustrious son of their country, whose fame reverberated throughout all Europe. Nine children, whose tender bloom and early progress had been remarked with solicitude by his fellow citizens, mul-

tiplied and consolidated those affectionate ties subsisting betwixt him and his country; and the public affection surveyed, with peculiar complacency, those pledges whom he held most dear and valuable.

Whenever Egmont appeared in public, it was a prelude to some solemn spectacle or scene of triumph; all the bystanders, who gazed at him, recounted the eventful story of his life: his exploits were celebrated by the loquacity of his comrades; mothers shewed him to their children at the equestrian games.

A courteous, noble, and gracious demeanor, the bright ornaments of chivalry, adorned his merits with unspeakable grace: a friendly salute, or an affectionate squeeze, conveyed a sure pledge of his benevolence to his fellow citizens. His open countenance was an index of his ingenuous soul; his

secrets were not more discreetly treasured up by his candour, than his wealth by his benevolence, and his ideas were as readily communicated as they were conceived. His religion was merciful and philanthropic, but was far from being pure, because she borrowed her light from his feelings, and not from his reason; a soldier's creed, voluptuous and accommodating, devoted to the cause of the church, in like manner as his sword to the service of his monarch, because it was a trusty armour wherewith he must be girded in the dreadful emergency of a battle: and because the acquisitions of the memory are more rapid than those of the judgment. Egmont was swayed by his conscience, rather than by principle: his reason had not framed her own code of laws, but merely learnt it by rote; on which account, the bare sound of an action was

sufficient to make him condemn the action itself. In his judgment, men were absolutely good or bad, although they might not actually possess either of those attributes; in his system of morality, no medium obtained betwixt virtue and vice; for which reason, a single good quality oftentimes confirmed his opinion concerning an individual.

Egmont possessed all those sublime qualities, that constitute an heroic character; he was a more accomplished soldier than the prince, but greatly inferior to him as a politician: the latter had formed an accurate estimate of human life; Egmont surveyed it through the magic lanthorn of a seductive imagination. Men, who, by the munificence of fortune, have been elevated to a pinnacle of prosperity, which they have not ascended by dint of their own su-

perlative merits, are very apt to forget the necessary concatenation betwixt cause and effect, and to impute the eternal order and unchangeable laws of nature to a miraculous and irresistible destiny, whereby they are exalted to a state of phrenzy, and induced, like Cæsar, blindly to confide in their fortune. Such a character was Egmont. Full of a vain conceit of imputed merits, which the fond partiality of his fellow citizens had greatly over-rated, he was wholly absorbed by these delicious sensations, as if he were entranced in some pleasing reverie. He was a stranger to fear, because he placed his sole dependence upon that deceitful boon, which chance had given him in the public affection; and he firmly believed in the existence of honour and justice, because he basked in the sunshine of prosperity.

Nay even the most flagrant proofs of the Spanish duplicity could not arouse him from this fatal security, and on the scaffold he was still animated by a ray of hope. By a tender solicitude for the interests of his family, his patriotism was overruled by meaner regards. Because his property and personal safety were endangered, he durst not sacrifice every thing to the welfare of his country. William of Orange renounced his allegiance to the throne, because arbitrary power was a severe restraint upon his proud, independent mind: not that he was void of ambition, but because his lofty ambition would not receive any favours, nor acknowledge any obligations whatsoever; for this very reason, he conferred the boon of liberty upon others; Egmont possessed vanity; on which account, he courted the smiles of royalty.

The former was a citizen of the world; Egmont supported no higher character than that of a native of Flanders.

Philip the Second had still a mighty debt to discharge towards the hero of St. Quentin, and the regency of the Netherlands appeared to be the only appropriate reward for such transcendent merit. Birth and dignity, the voice of the nation, and personal abilities, pleaded with equal force and vehemence for Egmont, as well as for William; and, if either of them was overlooked, the other seemed to be the only personage worthy to supply his place. Two such competitors, whose merits were nearly upon a level, might have greatly embarrassed Philip in his choice, if he had ever seriously harboured a design to fix upon either of the two. But those superior qualifications, whereby their respective claims

were supported, were powerful motives for their exclusion; and the national wishes for their elevation, determined him, finally to reject and degrade them. Philip had no occasion for a governor, who possessed an absolute command over the affections, and all the energies of the empire, and upon whose gratitude the public had such strong claims, by this testimony of its affection.

By his descent from the dukes of Guelders, Egmont inherited a family grudge against the Spanish house, and it seemed highly impolitic, to place the supreme power in the hands of a man, who might entertain a secret desire to avenge the wrongs of his forefathers upon the son of their oppressor.

The setting aside of their favourites, could give no just cause of offence to the people, or to the parties themselves; for, it was pretended, that the king was induced to

exclude them both, because he was unwilling to give either of the two the preference before the other. Notwithstanding the failure of his ambitious views with regard to the regency, the prince of Orange, still cherished some hopes of being able to establish his influence and authority in the Netherlands. Amongst other candidates for this high office, Christina, duchess of Lothrain, and cousin-german to the king was also one, who had rendered many important services to the crown, by acting as mediatrix during the treaty of Chateau Cambresis. William entertained a secret partiality for her daughter, and was in hopes of obtaining her hand, by interposing his good offices for the mother: but he was not aware that his good will was actually prejudicial to her cause.

The duchess Christina was rejected, not

so much as was pretended, because she was a vassal of France, and for this reason, obnoxious to the Spanish court; but in reality, because she was countenanced by the natives and by the prince of Orange.

Whilst the Public were as yet kept in anxious suspense, who should be their future sovereign, all of a sudden, Margaret of Anjou made her appearance on their territory, whom the king had called from the remote kingdom of Italy, in order to invest her with the regency of the Netherlands.

Margaret was the illegitimate offspring of Charles the Fifth, and of a noble Flemish lady, Vangeest, and was born in the year 1522. Out of regard to the reputation of the family, she was at first brought up in obscurity, but her mother, who was more strongly influenced by the dictates of va-

nity, than by the punctilios of honour, was not over nice or scrupulous in concealing the mystery of her origin; and a princely education soon proclaimed her to be of imperial extraction. For the benefit of her education, she was placed under the superintendence of her aunt Margaret, at Brussels, who, at that time, administered the regency of the Low Countries; but she lost her guardian in her eighth year, and this trust devolved upon Mary, queen of Hungary, a sister of the Emperor. At the age of four years, she was already betrothed to a prince of Ferrara, but this match was broken off in the sequel, and Alexander of Medicis, the new duke of Florence, was destined to be her spouse; with whom her nuptials were actually consummated at Naples, after the return of the Emperor from his victorious campaign in

Africa. In the first year of this disastrous marriage, her spouse, by whom she was never sincerely beloved, was snatched from her side, by an untimely end; and her person was sacrificed, for a third time, to the ambitious views of her father. Octavius Farnese, a stripling, who had just completed the thirteenth year of his age, and grandson to Paul the Third, received along with his consort the gift of the duchies of Parma and Piacenza; and by a strange and unaccountable destiny, at the age of puberty, Margaret was contracted to a boy, in like manner, as she had been formerly, during her infancy, sold to a man.

Her masculine genius rendered this alliance still more absurd; for her dispositions were all manly, and the whole oeconomy of her life, was a satire upon her sex.

After the example of her governess, the

queen of Hungary, and of her great progenitor, Mary duchess of Burgundy, to whom these diversions had proved fatal; she was passionately addicted to the pleasures of the chace, and had acquired, in the pursuit of her favorite amusement, such bodily vigour, that she could support all the fatigues and hardships inseparable from this manner of life, with a degree of fortitude, superior to that of the male sex.

Her carriage was wholly devoid of female grace, insomuch that one would not have supposed her to be a masculine female, but rather a man disguised in woman's apparel; and nature, whose laws she had thus grossly violated, resented this affront, by afflicting her with the podagra, a masculine disease. To these rare qualifications was superadded a strong dose of monkish superstition, which was infused into her soul, by her

ghostly monitor and instructor, Ignatius Loyola. Amongst other penitential acts of Christian piety, with which she mortified her vanity, one of the most remarkable was, that during the passion week, she constantly washed the feet of a certain number of paupers, who had been previously instructed not to cleanse themselves : waited upon them at table like a menial servant, and dismissed them with rich presents.

Nothing more is requisite than this last trait in her character, in order to account for that extraordinary distinction which the monarch was pleased to confer upon her, preferably to all her rivals : for in this choice he had nothing to apprehend from the national partiality towards her, but his predilection for her was likewise justified by maxims of sound policy. Margaret was

born and educated in the Netherlands. She had consumed the prime of her youth in this country, and had adopted many of the national manners. Two regents, under whose tuition she was brought up, had gradually initiated her in those political principles, by which the singular genius of the nation ought to be governed; and in this particular she had a perfect model and archetype, whereby to regulate her conduct.

She was not deficient in proper talents for the administration of public affairs; for she had profited by the instructions of her guardians; and in the Italian school, she afterwards became a still more accomplished adept in the arts of government.

The Low Countries had, for some time, been accustomed to a female government; and Philip was in hopes that the keen edge, and rough temper of those tools with which

he was about to make his cruel incisions, would be somewhat mollified in the hands of a woman.

It is also pretended, that he was influenced in his choice by a deference towards his father, who was still alive, and had a great affection for his daughter: it is also probable, that he was desirous to qualify the severity of a mortifying refusal, which he gave to the duke of Parma, who was soliciting some favor at his hands; by this instance of regard for his spouse.

As the territory of the Duchess lay in the centre of his Italian dominions, and was constantly exposed to the invasion of his arms, he could, with the greater safety, invest her with such extraordinary powers. As a farther security for her good conduct, her son, Alexander Farnese, was retained at his court. All these considerations pleaded

sufficiently in her behalf; but they became still more decisive, by the powerful intercession of the bishop of Arras, and of the duke of Alba. The latter was influenced by jealousy and animosity against her rival competitors; the former already anticipated the accomplishment of his ambitious views, from the irresolute and fickle temper of the duchess.

At the head of a splendid retinue, Philip received the new regent on the confines of the country, and conducted her in great state to Ghent, where the States General were then assembled. As he intended to absent himself from the country for some time, he was willing to gratify the wishes of the nation, by convoking a general parliament, in order to give a legal sanction to the regulations which he had already established. He now

made his last solemn appearance before the natives of the Low Countries, who were henceforward to learn the oracles of their destiny from an obscure and remote quarter, as if they issued from the regions of the lower world.

In order to enhance the glory of this spectacle, he invested eleven knights with the illustrious order of the golden fleece. His sister was seated beside him upon an elevated chair, and he introduced her to the people as their future sovereign.

All the national complaints concerning the religious edicts, concerning the Inquisition, the detention of the Spanish troops, and the illegal appointment of foreigners to high offices, were revived during this parliament, and agitated with much acrimony on both sides; some of them were artfully evaded or apparently abolished; others were re-

jected in the most peremptory manner. As he was a stranger to the vernacular tongue, the monarch communicated his sentiments through the organ of the bishop of Arras, enumerated, with much ostentation, all the blessings they derived from his government, assured them of a continuance of his gracious regards, and admonished them, in the most pathetic and impressive manner, to extirpate heresy, and to maintain the pure doctrines of the Orthodox faith. On his part, he solemnly assured them, that the Spanish troops should evacuate the Netherlands in the course of a few months, if they would only allow him a short respite, in order to cover the deficit in his finances, occasioned by the heavy charges of the late war, and to discharge the arrears due to his troops. The acts of the legislature were to remain in force; they were not to be op-

pressed with taxes above their ability; and the office of the Inquisition was to be administered with clemency and moderation. With regard to the choice of a regent, he had principally consulted the wishes of the nation, and had conferred this dignity upon a native, who was acquainted with their manners and customs, and was attached to them by the bonds of patriotic affection. He would therefore admonish them, to be grateful for this choice, and to manifest the same loyalty towards his sister, which they would testify to his own person. If, he added, any unforeseen difficulties should prevent my return, I will send you my son, prince Charles, who shall reside at Brussels.

Some resolute members of this assembly ventured to make one effort more for the expiring interests of religious liberty. They were of opinion, that every community

ought to be treated according to its peculiar genius and character, in like manner, as an individual, according to the habit and constitution of his body. The southern monarchies, for example, might be happily constituted, under a certain modification of restraint, which the northern climes would not tolerate. A Fleming, they added, would never consent to bear a yoke, to which a Spaniard would submit without repining, and would rather proceed to extremities, if force were employed against him. Their reasonings were supported by some of the royal counsellors, who strongly urged the policy of mitigating the rigour of those edicts. But Philip remained inflexible. "He had rather not govern at all," was his answer, "than reign over heretics."

According to a regulation already introduced by Charles the Fifth, three legislative

councils, or supreme chambers, were super-added to the powers of the regent, and took an active share along with the former in the administration of public affairs. During Philip's stay in the Netherlands, these legislative assemblies had lost a considerable part of their influence, and the first of the three, the National Council, was totally suspended. Now, that he quitted the reins of government, they resumed their former functions. Those, who obtained a seat in the national council, which deliberated concerning peace and war, as also concerning foreign relations, were the bishop of Arras, the prince of Orange, the count of Egmont, the president of the privy council, Viglius van Zuichem, van Ayta, and the count of Barlaimont, president of the council of finance. All the knights of the golden fleece, all the privy counsellors, and mi-

nisters of finance, as also the members of the grand senate at Meehlin, which had been placed under the controul of the privy council at Brussels, by Charles the Fifth, obtained a seat and vote in the national council, if the regent thought proper to require their attendance. The management of the royal revenues and crown lands was vested in the council of finance; and the privy council was occupied with the regulation of the police, and with the administration of justice; and issued regal patents and grants of pardon.

The magistracies of the several provinces were either filled by new appointments, or the ancient governors were confirmed in their dignity.

Flanders and Artois were delegated to the count of Egmont; Holland, Zealand, Utrecht and West Friesland, along with

the county of Burgundy, to the prince of Orange. The count of Aremberg obtained the magistracy of East Friesland, Overysse and Groningen; the count of Mansfeld that of Luxembourg; Namur was given to Barlaimont; Hennegau, Chateau Cambresis, and Valenciennes, to the marquis of Bergen; Tournay and its dependencies, to the baron of Montigny.

Other provinces were assigned to governors, who are less deserving of notice.

Philip of Montmorency, count of Hoorne, who was succeeded in the magistracy of Zutphen and Guelders, by the count of Megen, was confirmed in his rank of high admiral of the navy. Each of the provincial governors was at the same time knight of the golden fleece, and member of the national council. Each of them had the supreme inspection over the soldiery

raised for the security of his province, over the police, and the administration of justice; save only in Flanders, where the governor could not interfere in legal concerns. Brabant was absolutely placed under the jurisdiction of the regent, who, according to ancient usage, established her residence at Brussels. The appointment of the prince of Orange to his magistracies, was, indeed; contrary to the constitution of the land; because he was a foreigner; but several domains, which he possessed in different provinces, or which he administered in trust for his son, his long residence in the country, and, above all, the extraordinary confidence which the public reposed in his patriotic sentiments, gave him more substantial claims, in default of a nominal title.

The military force of the Low Countries consisted originally in three thousand horse,

but at present amounted to little more than two thousand, and was divided into fourteen squadrons; the supreme command of which was assigned to the provincial governors, and moreover to the duke of Arschot, the counts of Hoogstraten, Bossu, Roeux, and Broederode. This cavalry, which was dispersed throughout the seventeen provinces, was only ready to act upon a sudden emergency; and although it was insufficient for any enterprize of moment, yet it was fully adequate to maintain the internal security of the country. The courage of these soldiers was approved, their military renown was established throughout all Europe. In addition to this cavalry, it was proposed to levy a body of infantry, but the States would not consent to it. Amongst the foreign troops, some German regiments were kept in pay, to whom large

arrears were now due. The four thousand Spaniards, against whom such heavy complaints had been made, lay in garrison, upon the confines of the country, and were placed under the orders of two Spanish officers, Mendoza and Rovero.

Amongst the Belgian nobility who were honourably distinguished by the monarch in these new appointments, the names of the Count of Egmont, and of William of Orange are the most conspicuous. However inveterate that animosity might be, which he had conceived against these two competitors, and in particular against the last of them, yet did he condescend to honour them with these public marks of favour, because his plans of revenge were not fully ripe for execution, and because they were adored by the people with the most superstitious veneration. Their territorial

revenues were exempted from taxes; the most lucrative magistracies were delegated to them; they were highly flattered by a signal, if not a candid proof of his confidence, when he made them a voluntary offer of the command over his Spanish forces. But at the very moment whilst he was heaping public favours upon the prince, he privately inflicted the most cruel injury upon him. Apprehensive, lest an alliance with the powerful house of Lothrain might render this dangerous vassal more bold and enterprising, he contrived to frustrate his hopes of obtaining a princess of that house; an injury which William could never forgive. Nay, his enmity to the latter, made him once lay aside his arts of dissimulation, and betrayed him into some unguarded expressions, that were not congenial to the dispositions of Philip. When he was pre-

paring to embark at Vliessingen, being surrounded by the nobles of the land, he so far forgot himself, as publickly to reproach the prince with being the author of all the disturbances. The prince answered, with apparent composure, that what had happened, had been done by the Estates of their own accord, and was conformable to the strictest principles of justice. “ No, “ returned the monarch, seizing his hand, “ and shaking it with much vehemence; “ not by the Estates, but by yourself, by “ yourself alone!” The Prince was confounded, and without waiting for the departure of the King, wished him a good journey, and returned to town. Thus private enmity rendered that animosity incurable, which [this just and worthy character had already conceived against the oppressor of a free nation, and hastened

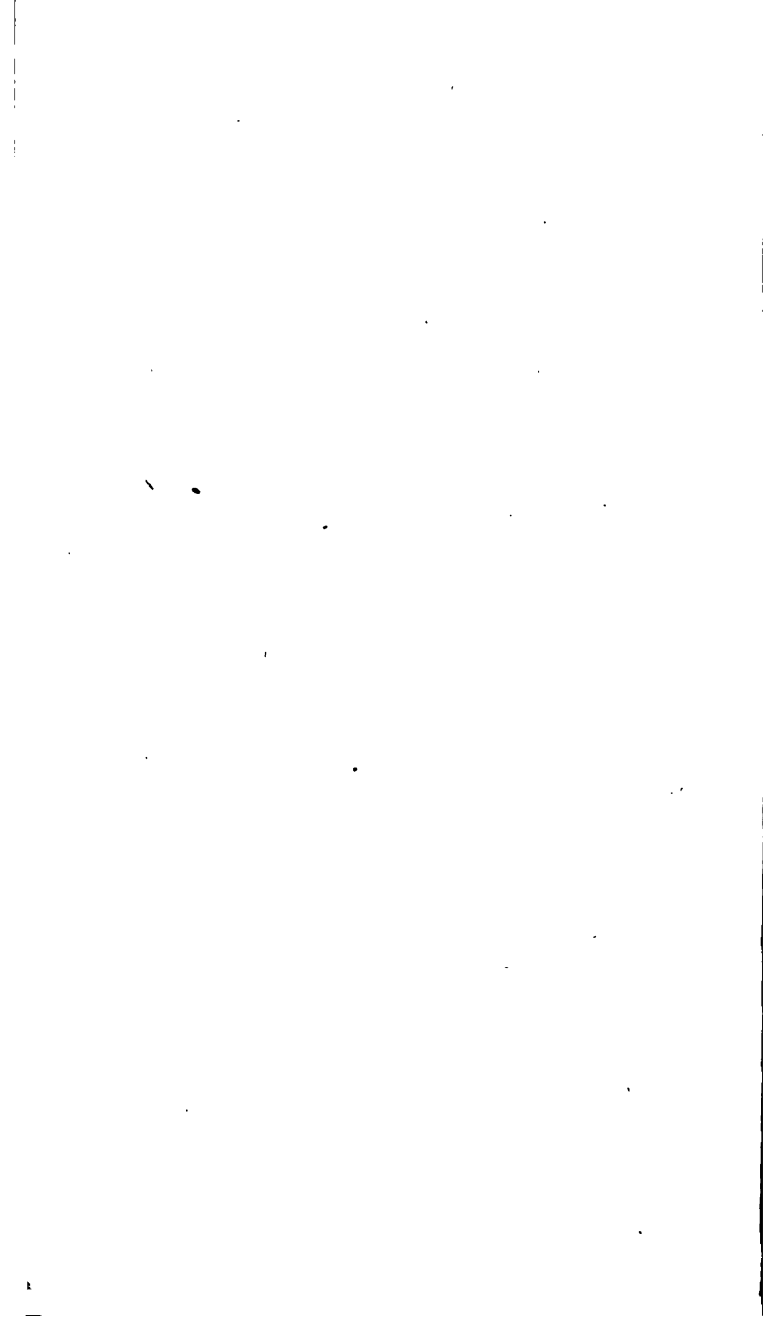
the accomplishment of that grand Revolution, which severed seven costly gems from the Spanish diadem.

THE END.

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